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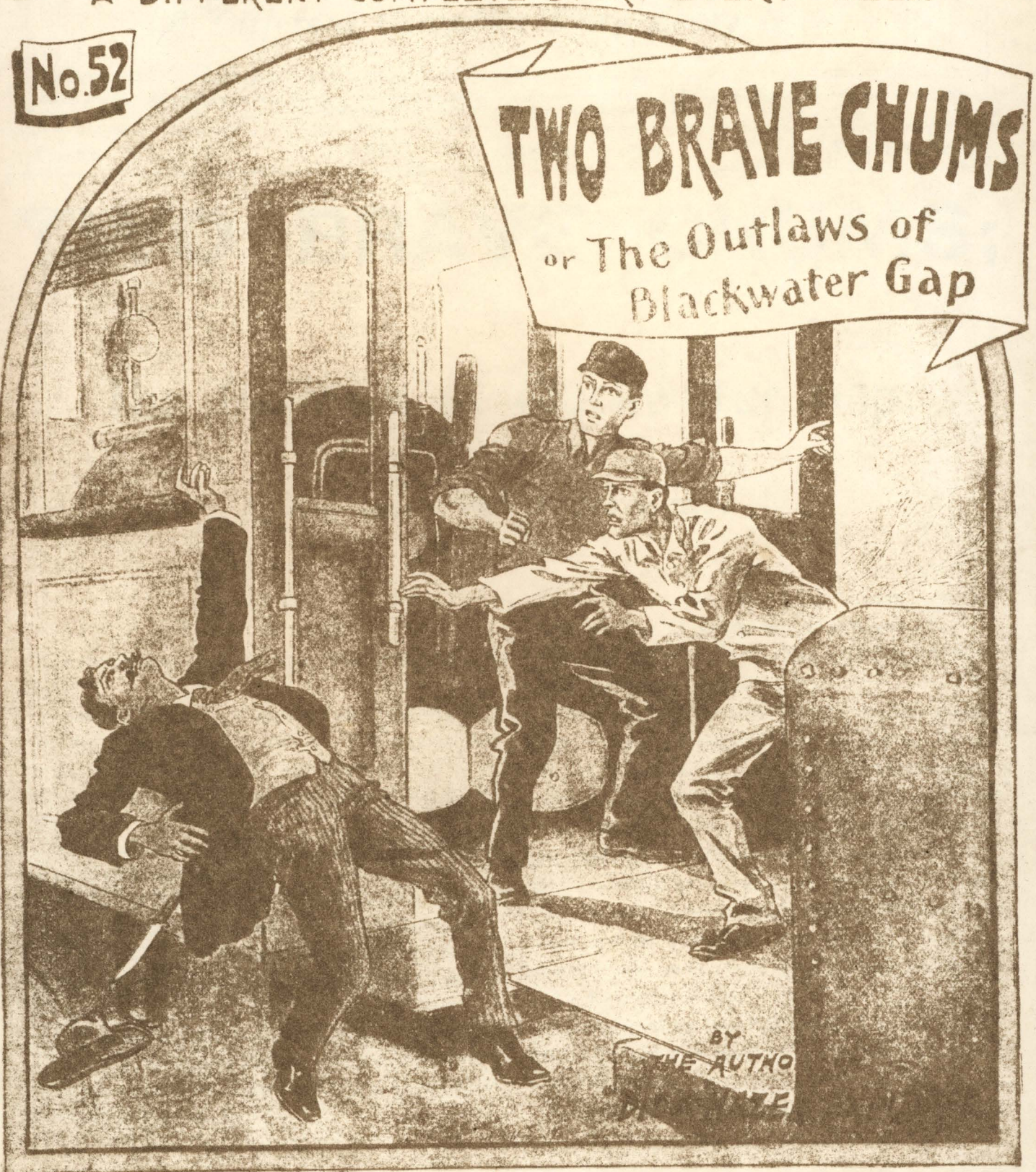
BRAVE AND BOLD

A DIFFERENT COMPLETE STORY EVERY WEEK

No. 52

TWO BRAVE CHUMS

or The Outlaws of
Blackwater Gap



BY

THE AUTHOR

DISCONTINUED

The fireman caught him just in time, and with one mighty effort, he seized the outlaw captain and flung him completely off the locomotive. "Thank you!" exclaimed Dell, as he arose to his feet and seized his mate by the hand. "You saved my life!"

BRAVE & BOLD

A Different Complete Story Every Week

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TWO BRAVE CHUMS;

OR

The Outlaws of Blackwater Gap.

By the author of "DICK HAZEL, EXPLORER."

CHAPTER I.

DELL AND ROLL.

Great excitement prevailed in the thriving little town of Canto.

A train of the Canto, Blackwater and Peakville Railroad had been held up by outlaws. The engineer and fireman were shot down, the passengers relieved of all their valuables, and the mail bags rifled by the daring villains.

This news was startling enough for the inhabitants of the lively little Nevada town.

The C., B. & P. R. R. was a single track affair of about twenty-five miles in length, and ran but six trains daily.

It had not been in existence over a year previous to the time our story opens, but was already doing a paying business.

Canto was not very many miles from a well-known Western city, and Peakville, the terminus of the road, was almost in the heart of the silver mining district of the prominent little State.

Blackwater was the only station between them, and was a settlement of perhaps two dozen houses.

It was named after a river which ran through it, whose waters were almost as black as ink.

Half a mile from the little depot the river ran through a sort of split in the ridge of mountains that ran through that section, and this point was called Blackwater Gap.

There was probably no place in the State that was wilder looking or more picturesque than this. Gigantic bluffs and needle-like peaks reared themselves on all sides, and green valleys and yawning chasms lay beneath them.

It was near Blackwater Gap that the train had been robbed, and the account the train hands and passengers gave of it was that the whole thing had been done by less than a dozen masked men.

As nothing of the kind had happened before, the officials of the road were more or less worried about sending out further trains.

And, what was more, there was not an engineer in the

employ of the company who would volunteer to make the run through to Peakville.

This is how matters stood on the morning following the daring robbery.

Superintendent Abbott was in a very agitated frame of mind. He paced up and down his office, at a loss what he should do.

The mail must certainly be delivered at Blackwater and Peakville that day.

Presently there came a knock at the office door.

"Come in!" called out the superintendent.

The door opened. A young fellow scarcely out of his teens entered.

"Is this Mr. Abbott?" he questioned, politely.

"It is, sir. What can I do for you?"

The young man handed a sealed envelope to the superintendent.

Mr. Abbott lost no time in tearing it open and reading the contents.

Then it was that he looked keenly at his visitor.

"I had an idea that they would send me an older and more experienced man," he said.

"Age does not always count, sir," was the reply, in a respectful tone.

"Well, let it be as it may. I am willing to trust you. By your appearance I would judge that you are brave and determined."

"Thank you, Mr. Abbott. All I want is your confidence, and I'll succeed in accomplishing what you desire me to do. I come highly recommended, as you see."

"Oh, yes! Let me see," and the superintendent again looked at the letter. "Your name is Rollin Smith?"

"Yes, sir, and I have followed my profession four years—since I was sixteen."

"Well, I must say the more I see of you the more I am pleased. When——"

Mr. Abbott was interrupted by a sudden tapping at the door.

"Come in!" he said, and then turning to Rollin Smith, he whispered:

"An employee, probably. Pay attention to what is said."

Just then the door opened and in came a bright, active young fellow of about the stature of the superintendent's visitor, only two years his junior.

This was Dell Watson, a fireman on the road.

He had started in almost the first day the C., B. & P. R. R. began to run trains, and was now an adept at his business.

"Well, Dell," queried Mr. Abbott, "any news?"

"No, sir, only that I came to tell you that I will run No. 5 to Peakville if you get a man to fire for me."

"What!" and the superintendent sprang to his feet, "you run the train to Peakville? Do you mean it?"

"Yes, sir, I certainly do, and I'll guarantee to make the run in safety, as far as the engine and boiler are concerned."

"Let me see," and Mr. Abbott scratched his nose thoughtfully. "It seems to me I have heard it said that you had the making of a good engineer in you, and—by Jove! I'll risk it, anyhow! You shall have No. 5 placed at your disposal at once. Now, then, where are we going to get a man who understands firing to accompany you?"

"Right here!" spoke up Rollin Smith. "I am just the man for that business!"

"You? Do you understand firing a locomotive?" questioned the superintendent, in surprise.

"Yes," replied Smith. "My father was an engineer, and many a trip I made with him when a boy. I can and will do my part, I assure you."

"I guess we will have no trouble as far as the working part of No. 5 is concerned, Mr. Abbott," said Dell Watson.

"Well, go ahead," was the reply, after a moment's thought. "Is there a conductor and crew willing to go?"

"Yes, sir. Dan Hayes and his men are ready to go at a moment's notice."

"Well, go to the engine, then. I will give the necessary orders to Hayes. Mr. Smith, I suppose it will be proper to tell the engineer the real nature of your business. I judge, from what I know of Dell, that he can keep a secret."

The two young fellows who were to figure as the heroes of this story—which, by the way, is founded on facts—left the office of the superintendent, and a few minutes later had donned overalls and jumpers.

It was a bright morning in the month of June, and when No. 5 pulled out with three cars, which were partly filled with passengers, who were bound to get to their respective homes in either Blackwater or Peakville at all hazards, a cheer went up from the crowd who had gathered about the depot.

Dell soon showed that he could run a locomotive as well as the best engineer who had pulled a throttle, and Roll Smith handled the coal like a veteran.

After a minute or two, when they were gliding along nicely, Dell turned to his fireman and said:

"I guess we can manage all right."

"I am sure we can," was the reply. "By the way, just call me Roll, and I'll call you Dell, as I heard the superintendent address you."

"All right. We can't tell what will happen before this run is over, so we may as well understand each other. For my part, I came prepared for an attack from the outlaws. I have a heavy six-shooter in my pocket."

"So have I—not only one, but a pair of them; and I've got these things, too; somebody might want to wear them before we get back."

To the young engineer's astonishment, his fireman produced a couple of pairs of handcuffs!

"I am a detective," went on Roll. "I was sent to Canto on purpose to hunt down the outlaws who wrecked the train yesterday."

"Good!" cried Dell. "I'll help you all I can."

"Thank you. I am satisfied you are made of the right sort of stuff. The chances are if we make this run in safety you will be appointed to take charge of this engine permanently, and, if you are, I will be your fireman the biggest part of the time. I do not think I have an easy task ahead of me, but I am going to stick to it till I locate the headquarters of this daring band of villains. Once this is done, the rest will not be so hard."

Dell nodded, as he put on just a little more speed.

"No one else must know that I am here for the purpose of hunting down the outlaws," went on the young detective.

"I should not have mentioned it, anyway," assured Dell.

The two kept conversing all the way, keeping a sharp lookout as they did so.

When within about a mile of Blackwater Gap they suddenly saw a man spring upon the track and wave his hat, as though he wanted them to stop the train.

CHAPTER II.

CAPT. CHARLIE.

About five miles from the wildly picturesque place known as Blackwater Gap was located a government

fort, which, for want of a better name, we will call Fort Marco.

Gen. Galveston Gunter was in command, and a right good man was he.

He was tall, well proportioned, and greatly resembled Gen. Winfield S. Hancock.

So much for the general. He had a very pretty daughter, aged seventeen, and bearing the name of Fannie.

Notwithstanding the fact that she lived in a wild part of the country, Fannie had suitors.

But she favored none of them, and the last proposal she rejected was from a dashing young ranchman of more than ample means, who went by the name of Capt. Charlie Williams.

This fellow was about twenty-five, tall, well proportioned and handsome. He also was very dashing in appearance, and had the name of being as brave and reckless as any man in the State.

The night he was rejected by the pretty Fannie Gunter was just a few days previous to the opening of our story.

Hitherto Capt. Charlie had always shown himself to be a gentleman, but when he received an unfavorable answer his rage knew no bounds.

But the general's daughter was not of the kind who scare very easily. She had lived too long in that wild section to be scared by an owl, so she merely listened to the railings of the man she had rejected, and when he was through politely showed him the door.

"You will repent this!" he hissed, as he passed from the room. "I loved you as no other man ever loved a woman, and you have made a fool of me, instead of turning from me at the start."

The girl gave a silvery laugh.

"I never encouraged you," she said, "or I never told you to keep away. It is you who will repent what you have said to-night—not me. Depart at once, sir, or I'll call my father!"

The young man went out, biting his lips till the blood came.

Mounting his horse, he rode away with the swiftness of the wind, spurring the faithful animal almost to madness in order to give vent to his rage.

Capt. Charlie was anything but the proper young man to become the husband of the pretty Fannie Gunter, but he never showed his true character until the night he became her rejected suitor.

When he arrived at his ranch he turned his steed over to a man who came out to meet him, and entered the low frame structure.

Half a dozen rough-looking men, who were playing cards, drinking and smoking, arose and greeted him.

"We trust that you have been lucky, captain," said one of them.

"Lucky!" was the angry retort, "anything but lucky, so it proves! I told you when I came back with the news that I was going to wed Gen. Gunter's daughter I would give you all a good time, and I meant to keep my word. But I now want to tell you that she has spurned my offer, and by her doing so has caused me to make up my mind to go into the business I had planned out, at once. Do you still swear to stick to me, men?"

"Yes! yes!"

"We do!"

"We'll stick to you till death!"

These and similar replies greeted the young villain's ear.

He smiled for the first time since leaving the presence of Fannie Gunter.

"If we are cool and cautious, we will make a mint of money out of my scheme," he said. "I will lead you to the cave I discovered this very night. Fill up a bumper, and we'll drink to the success of the outlaws of Blackwater Gap!"

The drinks were drawn from a cask in a corner of the room, and all hands drank to the toast.

"Now, then, get the horses ready and we will away to the cave that nature provided for our special use. Fannie Gunter has refused my offer of marriage, but she shall be mine by fair means or foul! She shall be the bold outlaw captain's bride inside of six months—I swear it!"

A murmur of approval went up from the inner room, and again Capt. Charlie smiled.

Ten minutes later the handsome young villain galloped from the ranch at the head of his six trusted men.

The distance to Blackwater Gap was not great, and it was not over an hour past midnight when they entered a ravine and rode through in single file, the horses on a walk.

That the place was not far from the railroad track was plainly evident, for the rumble of a late train from Peakville could be heard as it went dashing by.

Halfway up the ravine Capt. Charlie called a halt in a whispered command.

"Now behold something that no one but me has been aware of!" he exclaimed, as he dismounted and placed his hand upon a mass of tangled vines.

The next instant he threw the vines aside and an opening the size of an ordinary stable door was disclosed.

"Dismount and lead your horses in!" he commanded. "They must get used to this new headquarters, as well as ourselves."

Without any delay the men obeyed, and soon the seven were inside. The mass of vines was back in its former position, and silence reigned in the ravine.

Once inside Capt. Charlie lighted a match, and, picking up a pitch-pine torch that lay on a sort of natural shelf, applied the flame to it.

As the flickering flame pierced the inky darkness his followers saw that they were standing in a cave about thirty feet square.

The roof was high and arching, irregular, it is true; but it struck them as being just the place for the hiding place of a gang of lawbreakers.

"How do you like it?" queried Capt. Charlie.

"Fine!" was the unanimous retort.

"Well, this is only the stable. Leave the horses here and come on."

Much surprised, the six men followed him across the cave and into a narrow passage that had not been discerned by them.

This led some twenty or thirty feet, and then they came to a cave that was larger than the first, and still more cozy and hidden in appearance.

"Here shall be the headquarters of Capt. Charlie's band of outlaws!" exclaimed the daring young villain. "Between here and the ranch we will spend our time in the future, leading double lives. While we are outlaws we must always be in disguise, and I have the masks with me now. We will put them on, and see how we look."

He handed each of them a black mask, and they lost no time in putting them on.

As for himself, their leader first adjusted a wig of flowing dark brown hair to his head, and then, after putting on the mask, stuck a long black feather in his wide-brimmed hat.

The change it made in him was remarkable.

Not one of the men would have recognized him had they met him anywhere else but there!

"To-morrow night we will move what things we want to this place, and then we will be ready for business!" said Capt. Charlie.

CHAPTER III.

"THAT IS MINE!"

The appearance of the man on the track was so surprising to the young engineer that at first he knew not what to do.

"It is a ruse for the outlaws to stop us and rob the train!" exclaimed Roll.

"No," replied Dell, suddenly, as he shut off steam and put on the air brake, "I recognize the man. It is Gen. Gunter, who commands the fort."

"Oh," said the acting fireman, "if that is the case it must be all right."

The sudden stopping of the train created no little excitement among the passengers and crew. They rushed to the car platforms with revolvers in their hands, thinking, quite naturally, that the same gang who had held up the train the day before was at its work again.

But when they saw the single man hastening to board the train, the most of them recognized him, and their fears were quickly allayed.

The general got on the locomotive, and the conductor signaled for Dell to go ahead.

"What is the trouble, general?" Dell asked.

"Trouble?" was the excited reply, "trouble enough, I should say! My daughter was kidnaped from her room some time during the night, and I have been searching high and low for her."

"And you could find no trace of her?" asked the young engineer, astonished at the news.

"This is all I could find, and I hardly think this belonged to her."

The general took a black feather from his pocket.

It was in a badly crumpled state, and looked as though it had once adorned a lady's bonnet.

"Let me tell my story," panted the army officer, as Roll Smith took the feather and gave it a minute examination.

"I haven't told you half yet. About half a mile from this place, or the place where you picked me up, I met a masked man, who shot my horse from under me.

"I fell to the ground and struck on my head, the fall stunning me. When I came to I found that my weapons, money and valuables had been taken from me.

"It was then that I started for the railroad track, and had the good fortune to get there in time to signal you. Now, I want to get back to the fort as soon as possible, and send out a squad to search in these mountains. I am convinced that the fellow who robbed me is connected with the parties who stole my daughter away."

"Well, here we are at Blackwater," said Dell, as he slowed up and brought the train to a stop at a little station. "I sincerely hope you will be successful in finding your daughter."

Gen. Gunter got down upon the platform in a state of great agitation.

Conductor Hayes came running up, followed by several of the passengers, and the situation was explained to them in a few words.

"It must be an organized gang that has just started to operate in this vicinity," observed Hayes. "General, you will probably receive a notice that a ransom will be required to obtain the release of your daughter."

"I will be only too glad to pay a ransom for her. But, confound it all! Look at the position it places me in! Me in charge of a government fort, and to have such a thing as this to happen right under my nose! And then to be robbed by a masked highwayman, in the bargain! This sort of thing shall not be tolerated. It shan't, I say!"

He was so excited now that his manner caused some of the passengers to smile in spite of themselves.

It was rather humiliating to the general, they were ready to admit.

As his portly form started up the hill in the direction of the fort, Dell got the signal to go ahead.

"See here," said the young detective, half a minute later, "I've got the black feather the general found. He forgot to ask me to give it back to him."

"What do you propose to do with it?"

"Keep it. The feather may furnish a clew to the hiding place of the outlaws. I haven't the least doubt in my mind that the same parties who held up the train yesterday stole the general's daughter."

"I suppose that is the proper conclusion to come to."

"Surely it is."

"Well, just look after your fire a bit. I am going to let her out from here to Peakville. The track is pretty

level all the way. I want to show Dan Hayes that I can make time when it is necessary."

"Excuse me! I almost forgot that I was your fireman."

The crackling of the coals as they went into the furnace door made sweet music to the ears of Dell Watson, and he gripped the throttle with a great deal of pride.

Only eighteen, and in full charge of a locomotive!

But that was not all! He had undertaken a task that experienced men had backed out from doing.

No wonder the boy felt proud! He could not help but think that he had on that morning stepped on the first rung of the ladder that led to fame.

On thundered the train, the daring young engineer keeping a sharp lookout.

He acted like a veteran, and Roll Smith could but admire his graceful bearing as he leaned from the window and gazed ahead—at his post, his hand grasping the throttle.

Without any further interruptions the train pulled in at Peakville, where nearly the entire population of the little mining town were waiting for it.

The passengers got off, and as they passed the engine Dell noticed that one of them—a young man dressed in a fancy Mexican costume, who had got on at Blackwater, eyed him rather curiously.

"Do you know that fellow?" asked Roll, who had also noticed the look the fellow gave the young engineer.

"No," was the reply, "I don't know him, but I have seen him before. I think he owns a ranch at Blackwater."

"He is a fellow that will bear watching, I think," observed the detective. "Well, I suppose we can go and get something to eat now; here comes the wiper to take charge of the engine."

"Yes; I am rather hungry, to tell the truth," and after making sure that everything was all right, Dell followed his companion to the station platform.

As this was not a regular run, Dell did not know what time he would leave Peakville. Dan Hayes was to receive instructions by telegraph from the superintendent in regard to this matter.

The engineer and detective walked up to the only restaurant Peakville afforded, and took a seat at one of the tables.

As they gave their order to the waiter they noticed that the fancily attired fellow who had got on at Blackwater occupied a seat not far from them.

As the reader might suppose, this was no other person than Capt. Charlie Williams.

It might as well be stated right here that it was he who had robbed the train and abducted the girl who had refused to become his wife.

When he saw a mere boy at the throttle of the locomotive he was surprised. Hence his keen look at Dell.

He saw the young engineer and fireman when they came in the restaurant, and he determined to get into conversation with them.

So when they sat down he got up and took his place at the same table.

"Pardon me, gentlemen," he said, "but I did not know I was riding behind a locomotive with such a young engineer at the throttle. Young man, I want to congratulate you for the manner in which you brought the train through. This is the quickest trip I ever made from Blackwater to Peakville."

"Thank you," retorted Dell. "This is the first time I have ever been in charge of a locomotive, although I have long known how to run one. I am glad you are pleased with the trip. I know we beat the best time from Blackwater to Peakville by a few minutes."

At this juncture the detective pulled out his handkerchief, and in doing so the crumpled feather came with it, and fell upon the floor.

Capt. Charlie gave a violent start.

"That is mine!" he cried, evidently speaking before he thought.

"If that black feather is yours, my friend, you evidently know something of the whereabouts of Gen. Gunter's daughter," calmly said Roll Smith, as he arose to his feet.

CHAPTER IV.

DELL'S PROMOTION.

With reddening cheeks Capt. Charlie sprang to his feet.

"How dare you speak of Gen. Gunter's daughter to me?" he thundered, at the same time drawing a revolver.

"Keep cool," the detective calmly said, but he had his revolver in his hand as soon as the outlaw captain did.

The two gazed at each other for a moment, and then Capt. Charlie sat down.

The look he got from Roll seemed to have great effect

upon him, for he breathed a sigh and put away his revolver.

"I was mistaken about the feather," he said. "I shouldn't have spoken the way I did, had it not been for the fact that it was once worn in the hat of a very close friend of mine—or I won't say that feather; it might have been another."

"You give a very good explanation of it," said the detective. "May I ask your name, and where you are located?"

"I am Capt. Charlie Williams, and I own the big ranch that is situated five miles from Fort Marco. Anybody in Blackwater will tell you who I am."

This conversation was more than interesting to Dell Watson. He had been making a study of Capt. Charlie ever since he came to their table, and he now came to the conclusion that he was not just what he wanted people to believe he was.

There was nothing else for Roll to do but sit down, too, and he did so.

"What will you have?"

It was Capt. Charlie who spoke.

Dell looked over the rather scant bill of fare, and so did Roll.

But neither of them answered.

"Come, let's be friendly. I'm going to stand the expense of the dinner. What will you have?"

There was no getting out of it now, so they gave their order to the waiter.

When they got up from the table Capt. Charlie paid for all they ate and drank, and then with a pleasant "good-day!" passed out.

"That man is a puzzle," observed the detective, when he had gone, "but I intend to unravel him some time."

The boy engineer nodded.

"Yes," he said, "he is not altogether what he seems. I think all his pleasantness was put on, and that if he had had his way about it he would have shot you dead in your tracks."

"No doubt of it. Well, I have learned this much: He is the one for me to watch in order to learn something about the outlaws of Blackwater Gap."

"I hardly think that. But still, I think it would be good policy to keep an eye on Capt. Charlie and investigate if what he says about himself is true."

"Oh, I'll do that, never fear."

The two now walked back to the depot and boarded their locomotive.

Dell backed the train out, switched the cars, and then went upon the turntable.

While No. 5 was being turned Dan Hayes, the conductor, came up.

"We are to go back on the schedule time of the regular afternoon train," he said. "Superintendent Abbott has just telegraphed me to that effect."

Dell looked at his watch.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed, "we haven't quite an hour to stay, then."

When the time came for the return trip, No. 5, coupled to the same cars it had brought up, stood ready to go at the signal.

Dell was leaning from the cab window, watching the few passengers who entered the cars, and waiting for the conductor to give him the word.

Suddenly he noticed Capt. Charlie walk leisurely up the platform and board the smoking car.

"Our friend is going back with us," said the young engineer to his fireman.

"I wish I could get off at Blackwater for the purpose of shadowing him," Roll answered. "But never mind! To-morrow will do."

The trip home was made without a single mishap, and Superintendent Abbott was more than delighted when the train pulled into Canto exactly on time.

"I congratulate you, my boy!" he exclaimed, as he shook Dell's hand. "You have done what the regular engineer refused, and as a reward you are appointed a full-fledged engineer on the C., B. & P. R. R., and shall run No. 5 until further notice."

"Thank you, Mr. Abbott," returned Dell. "I sincerely hope that you will never have cause to regret promoting me. I will do my level best all the time."

CHAPTER V.

LIZZIE HAVERHILL.

Gen. Galveston Gunter was not the only one who was sorely disturbed over the abduction of his daughter Fannie.

Though he was a widower, and the girl had no mother to go into hysterics over what had happened, there was one in the household who loved Fannie quite as much as a woman could love another.

This was Lizzie Haverhill, the general's niece, who had lived with him since the death of her parents, some six or seven years previous.

Lizzie was about a year older than her cousin, was well formed, fairly good looking, and an expert with any kind of a weapon that used cartridges.

In addition to this, she was as brave and daring as the majority of young men.

Still, she had been in the room when her pretty cousin was stolen away. But chloroform did the business for her, and she was rendered unconscious before she scarcely knew what was taking place. In fact, she never caught a glimpse of any one after hearing the noise of their entrance.

When she returned to consciousness Fannie was gone—vanished, without a trace!

Of course she lost no time in alarming the household, and then it was that the general started out, with the success that the reader already knows.

When the commander of the fort came back unsuccessful, Lizzie Haverhill determined to try her luck.

So, without a word to any one, she went out to the stable where her horse was kept, and, mounting him, rode down into Blackwater to a friend's house.

Here she procured a suit of boy's clothes, and, putting them on, made some additional changes in her appearance, and then she was ready for business.

A Western girl usually knows how to handle a horse pretty well, and Lizzie was no exception.

Though she had told nobody, the girl had her suspicions as to who had abducted Fannie.

She knew her cousin had rejected the hand of Capt. Charlie Williams, and as she had always detested the handsome young ranchman, she naturally thought him to be responsible for the daring outrage.

"I'll ride out to the ranch of Williams," she said to herself. "Perhaps I may learn a good deal by doing so."

The horse she rode was a good one, and the distance to the ranch was soon covered.

Lizzie rode through the stockade gate, and did not halt till she reached the low-framed structure.

A burly-looking man at once came out.

"What d'ye want?" he demanded, gruffly.

"I'm lookin' for work," was the quick reply.

"Well, yer can't git it here!"

"I understand horses and cattle pretty well," went on

the disguised girl, not abashed by the man's surly manner. "Are you the boss?"

"Jist at present I am," he said, speaking in a more respectful tone. "Where did yer come from, anyhow, young feller?"

"From Peakville. I found I couldn't make much of a living there, so I've been looking for a job on some ranch."

"Hum! What's yer name, young feller?"

"Jack Buzzard," said Lizzie, speaking the first name that came in her mind.

"Well, yer can't git a job here, 'cause there's nothin' much doin'. Ther captain are away ther most of ther time, an' we ain't raisin' no stock ter speak of. So long, young feller!"

The man turned abruptly on his heel and entered the building.

There was nothing left for the girl to do but to go on about her business, or, in other words, leave the ranch.

So she turned her horse's head and rode slowly away.

"The captain is away the most of the time, is he?" she muttered. "I wonder where he stays when he isn't here? I must find out, and that pretty quick, for if my theory is correct, he has Fannie hidden away somewhere, and it won't do to let her be there very long."

Urging her steed into a canter, she allowed him to proceed in the direction that best suited him, and presently found herself following a trail leading in the direction of the railroad track.

It was a wild section of the country, too, that she was approaching, but Lizzie liked wildness, and, thinking of the train robbery a few days before, she got her revolver in readiness.

Then it struck her that possibly the same parties that had held up the train with such good success on their part might be the ones who so mysteriously spirited off her cousin.

"If that is the case," she thought, "it may be good policy for me to hunt around here a bit."

It was well toward noon when she reached a narrow defile, close to Blackwater River, and as she rode slowly along, gazing at the towering peaks far above her, she was suddenly startled by hearing the sounds of approaching horsemen.

There was nothing to be particularly afraid of in this, but the disguised girl got herself in readiness for anything just the same.

The next minute two horsemen appeared galloping toward her, and as calmly as possible she rode on to meet them.

"Hello, youngster!" called out one of them, as he reined in his horse, "what might you be doin' around here?"

"Looking for a job," was the calm rejoinder.

"What at?" queried the other fellow.

"Ranching, or anything I can do."

"Huh! huh!" laughed the man who had first spoken. "I guess you won't have much luck at gittin' a job around here. Got any terbacker?"

"No, I don't use it," was the truthful reply.

"I don't believe you! Let me see!" and the ruffian reached over to go through Lizzie's pockets.

Then it was that he received a surprise.

The muzzle of a six-shooter came in contact with the end of his nose, and a stern voice exclaimed:

"Hands off!"

As his companion drew back in a hurry the other man laughed.

"Ain't so innercent as he looks, is he, Bill?" he cried, half tauntingly.

Uttering an oath, he drew his revolver and exclaimed:

The fellow addressed as Bill became very angry at this.

"I'll put a hole through the youngster for bein' so fresh."

"Put away your pistol!" called out Lizzie, drawing a bead full upon his heart.

But instead of obeying, he fired quickly, the bullet just grazing her cheek.

But that was the last time he ever pressed a trigger!

Recognizing the fact that the ruffian meant to kill her, the girl discharged her revolver.

The man reeled in the saddle, and then fell to the ground shot through the heart!

It being the first life she had ever taken, a sickening feeling came over the brave girl, and she was just about to urge her horse from the spot, when the remaining villain seized her from behind and held her powerless.

"I guess you'll suffer for puttin' an end ter Bill like that!" he cried, as he hauled her frail form across the pommel of his saddle. "Drop ther shooter, or I'll put six inches of cold steel through yer lung!"

Thud! The weapon dropped from the disguised girl's hands, and then, true to her sex, she swooned.

The man galloped away, the two riderless horses following him through an instinct of their own.

When Lizzie Haverhill returned to consciousness a few minutes later she found herself in a rudely furnished underground apartment.

Though she was not aware of it, she was in the retreat of the outlaws of Blackwater Gap, and her captive cousin was scarcely twenty feet from her!

CHAPTER VI.

JACK BUZZARD: OUTLAW.

When Capt. Charlie got off the train at Blackwater, he made his way to the stable where he had left his horse, and soon rode off in the direction of his ranch.

The majority of his trusted men were at the hidden retreat near Blackwater Gap, and he knew his fair captive would be safe.

To make matters as pleasant as possible for the girl—for he really loved her madly—he had procured an Indian girl to stay with her and attend her every want.

When the villain reached his ranch he asked the man in charge if any one had been around there, more especially any one from the fort.

"There's only been a boy here, who was lookin' for a job on ther ranch," was the reply. "It ain't very long since he left rather disappointed like."

"What sort of a looking chap was he?" queried Capt. Charlie.

"He was a regular young kid, not over fifteen, I should reckon. He'd been out to Peakville, but ther work must have been too hard for him, for he said he couldn't make anything there!"

"Oh!" and the outlaw breathed a sigh of relief. "I guess he didn't amount to anything to be suspicious of."

"No, sartinly not."

"Well, put this horse up and get out my new one. I'll ride over to the gap and see how things are. I've got a big job on hand for next Tuesday, and I want to see what the boys think of it."

"Is there much money in it?" asked the man, as he took the captain's horse by the bridle.

"Yes, lots of it."

"Good enough!"

Capt. Charlie entered the house and returned a few

minutes later with a small bundle he desired to take to the outlaws' retreat.

His man soon came along with the other horse, and mounting, the villain rode away.

As soon as he reached a lonely place he put on the disguise he had adopted to wear while posing as the leader of the outlaws of Blackwater Gap.

Then in dare-devil fashion he galloped along until the ravine was in sight.

Just as he reached it he saw two men carrying a dead body between them.

A quick glance told him that they were members of his gang, so he signaled them.

But they had already seen him, and had dropped their burden to wait for him.

"What does this mean?" he questioned in surprise.

"One of our fellows got done up, and by a boy, too," was the answer.

"A boy? Where is he now?"

"Tied hard an' fast inside."

"How did it come about?"

"Tried ter take some terbacker away from ther kid; got mad 'cause he couldn't do it; fired an' missed, an' then ther kid up an' flicked him!" was the explanation given by one of the men, who was really the fellow who had captured the disguised Lizzie Haverhill.

"This is too bad," said the captain, half to himself.

"We are goin' ter throw ther body in ther river," observed the other villain.

"All right. That will be the quickest way to dispose of it."

This was soon accomplished, and then all three entered the hidden cave.

"There's ther kid over there in ther corner," said one of the outlaws, pointing to the helpless form of Lizzie.

"He can wait a while," was the retort. "I want to see some one else first. How has she behaved, boys?"

"Been very quiet," was the reply. "Ther Indian girl must be good at entertainin'."

Capt. Charlie walked clear to the farther end of the underground apartment and knocked at a door made of rough planks.

"Who there?" came from within, in a not altogether unmusical voice.

"The captain," was the reply.

Open went the door, and an Indian maiden, gorgeously attired, faced him, revolver in hand.

"Ah!" she said, "it is Capt. Charlie!"

"That's right, Red Rose; always make sure that it is me before you open the door. You will be paid well for all you do for me."

The girl smiled, showing a fine set of white teeth as she did so.

Then, as her master entered the room—for such it might be called—she closed and locked the door.

At this juncture a form arose from a pile of skins and advanced to the center of the apartment.

It was Fannie Gunter. Her face was pale, but her eyes flashed defiantly.

"Have you decided to give me my liberty?" she demanded in a clear, ringing tone.

"When you make up your mind to be my good and lawful wife; then you shall go back to your father—some day," he replied.

"If I must become your wife in order to see my father again, then I shall never see him!"

"You will change your mind soon enough."

"Never!"

"Don't get excited over it. But I say you will. I know what I am talking about, and you don't—that is the difference."

As if fully realizing the helplessness of her position, the girl walked back and threw herself on the pile of skins.

"I shall call twice a day to see you," went on the captain in a voice that was now quite tender. "Think of what I have said: Marry the man who loves you, and all will be well inside of two months."

At a motion from him the Indian girl unlocked the door and he passed out.

"Now," said he, addressing the man he had left in charge, "I'll take a look at the boy who shot Bill. Let's see what sort of a looking fellow he is."

He was promptly conducted to the corner where Lizzie sat, pale and helpless.

In spite of her ill luck, the girl still assumed the character she was representing.

"So you are the kid who is so handy with a pistol, are you?" queried Capt. Charlie. "You don't look as though you had enough sand in you to make a scratch on a copper cent. Put him on his feet, men!"

The girl was quickly lifted to her feet.

"Why!" resumed the villainous captain, "you don't weigh over a hundred pounds! What is your name?"

"Jack Buzzard," was the reply.

"Where did you come from?"

"Peakville."

"Where were you born?"

"In Kansas."

"Got any relatives living?"

"None that I know of."

"And you are out of work, I suppose?"

"Yes."

"You've got lots of grit, but not strength enough to do heavy work—is that it?"

"You have hit the nail exactly on the head."

"Why did you shoot one of my men?"

"Because he tried to kill me."

Lizzie was gaining courage at every question the captain asked her. She did not recognize the man before her as being Capt. Charlie Williams, because his make-up was so perfect and he talked in a changed voice.

After a pause her questioner again spoke:

"How would you like to work for me? You might be able to take the place of the man you shot in self-defense."

"I'll work for you if the wages suit," replied the girl in a ready tone.

"Do you know what business I am engaged in?"

"Not exactly; but I can guess."

"Well, what business am I in?"

"You are a gentleman of the road—a road agent, or something like that, I would think."

"Not exactly, but pretty near. I am a full-fledged outlaw, who fears nothing or nobody!" and Capt. Charlie laughed, as though he felt that he had made a very brilliant speech.

"Well, I am willing to go to work for you, so long as I am not compelled to kill a man, unless it be absolutely in self-defense."

"You'll do, I guess!"

Then at a signal one of the men untied the cords that bound the prisoner.

Lizzie breathed a sigh of relief.

"I will pay you fifty dollars a month and your board," said Capt. Charlie. "Your duties, for the present, will be to keep this place in ship-shape order, and you are not

to go out into the open air till I give you permission. Are you satisfied?"

"Yes, captain."

"Very well. Men, you hear this? Jack Buzzard, our new member, is not to leave the retreat until I give him permission. Study him well, and make sure that he is going to make a good member."

"All right, captain!" came the unanimous retort.

This was not exactly what Lizzie wanted, but it was much better than being killed, she took it.

She knew her cousin was a captive in the place, for she had heard her voice when the captain had entered the room, which was not far from the place where she had been sitting on the floor of the cave.

Now, it was her duty to rescue Fannie, and she meant to do it.

CHAPTER VII.

"ARREST THAT MAN! HE——"

Fannie Gunter, though plucky, was becoming disheartened at her long confinement in the outlaws' cave.

Capt. Charlie had revealed his identity to her the first thing, and every day he visited her twice in the hope of receiving a favorable answer to his suit.

But each time the girl informed him that she would rather die than become his wife.

The Indian girl had proved so attentive to her that Fannie learned to like her; and when she showed this, Red Rose became very devoted and more kindly than ever.

The outlaw captain paid a visit to the captive he hoped to make his wife a short time before he set out for Peakville, for the purpose of concealing himself in the express car.

He was not disheartened when Fannie told him she would never change her mind, thus showing that he possessed more patience than the average man.

Shortly after he took his departure, Red Rose turned to the prisoner under her care and said:

"White lady tired; she no want to stay here, but captain say she must."

"Can't you get me out of this place, Red Rose?" cried Fannie, clutching on to the hope that the Indian maiden's words gave her, as a drowning man seizes a straw.

"No, white lady; me can't get you out. Me no dare, and if me do dare, me could not do it. Too many bad white men outside in cave."

"There must be some way for me to get out of here!" cried the girl, despairingly. "Red Rose, can't you get out and tell the people at the fort where I am?"

"No; the men no let me out."

"Then what am I to do?"

Red Rose lowered her voice to a whisper, and her eyes blazed as she did so. "If you no want to marry Capt. Charlie, me kill him for you when he try to make you!" she said.

"Thank you, Red Rose," Fannie answered, as she squeezed the girl's hand; "I hope it does not come to that, but if it does I shall depend upon you. Help me all you can, and when we both get out of here you shall live with me in my house at the fort, and you shall have all the fine clothes you want."

"Me do as me say!" exclaimed the Indian girl, drawing herself up to her full height. "Red Rose never tell lie!"

The captives courage began to pick up wonderfully. She now felt that she had some one to protect her from the villainous Capt. Charlie, and she resolved to wait patiently for the time to come when she should be free.

But just how it was that her father and the soldiers at the fort had not found the hiding place of the outlaws she could not understand.

She was sure she was not over five miles from her home, and yet it seemed as though the distance might be five hundred.

The day waned and night came on apace.

Red Rose went out into the main cave after some oil to fill the lamp.

When she came in she pointed to a piece of paper that was tied to the oil can and said:

"New kind of oil; must read paper first."

Fannie removed the paper and unfolded it.

As her eyes rested upon the writing it contained she gave a violent start and would have fallen if Red Rose had not caught her.

"What matter?" cried the Indian girl in alarm. "What paper say?"

Fannie recovered herself almost instantly.

"Listen! I will read it to you," she replied; and then, in a tone that was almost a whisper, she read the following:

"MY DEAREST FANNIE:—I am in the outlaws' cave, disguised as a boy. This is the first opportunity I have had to communicate to you. I am making arrangements

to rescue you. If the Indian girl can be trusted, write me an answer, and if she cannot, write anyhow, and tell her you don't understand how the oil is to be used—that she must bring the note to the one who gave it to her for more explicit instructions. Will wait anxiously for a reply. Your cousin,
LIZZIE."

"What do you think of that, Red Rose?"

"The boy who give oil to me is a girl?" was the puzzled exclamation that came from the Indian girl's lips.

"Yes; it is my cousin who wrote this note. How she came to get here I have no idea."

"Boy been here almost as long as you."

"Impossible, Red Rose!"

"He come next day."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes; me no forget. He come next day after you. Men no let him out of cave."

"Ah! I see. Lizzie is a sort of prisoner, then?"

"He do as please in cave, but no go out."

"Wonderful!" And, so saying, Fannie produced a pencil and notebook and wrote a reply to her cousin, telling her the full particulars of her capture and asking how it was that she (Lizzie) found the outlaws' retreat.

This Red Rose delivered readily enough, and she did it as secretly as possible.

She took the oil can back, and as the disguised Lizzie reached for it these words came to her ears:

"Me friend; say nothing!"

Without showing the least particle of surprise, Lizzie answered:

"All right."

Then, as the Indian girl made her way back to the quarters of her charge, she sought a secluded place in the cave and read Fannie's reply.

When the brave girl had devoured the contents of the note, she felt more than paid for the risk she had run in coming to the hidden retreat.

During the next few hours she was constantly on the lookout for an opportunity to pay a visit to her cousin.

But none came. Some of the outlaws were constantly in the way.

Once she decided to work her way to the outside and then make for the fort as soon as possible to get assistance enough to capture the outlaws and rescue Fannie.

But she was balked in this, for the man on guard never relaxed his vigilance.

At last the disguised girl gave it up and sought the rude couch she had fixed to her own liking and fell asleep.

When Capt. Charlie visited Fannie the next morning, he found her in a much more cheerful mood than when he last saw her, and he attributed this to the probability that she was slowly getting around to his views in the matter.

But such was not the case, as the reader knows. Fannie felt in better spirits because she felt that there was a chance for her speedy relief from bondage.

Capt. Charlie spoke pleasantly to the disguised Lizzie when he came out into the main cave, and informed her that the next time he and his men went out on business she should be one of the party.

"Take me out with you the next time you go alone," said the girl. "I am tired of being cooped up here; I need a little fresh air."

The outlaw thought a moment and then said:

"All right. You shall go out with me now."

Lizzie's heart gave a bound.

She felt that she might be able to get word to the general at the fort and let him know exactly where she and his daughter were.

"We will go on horseback," said Capt. Charlie, "so get my horse and your own ready at once."

The supposed boy flew to do his bidding, and soon both animals were in readiness.

Ten minutes later Lizzie rode through the ravine for the first time since the day she shot and killed the outlaw.

When they had proceeded about a mile the captain removed his disguise, and, turning to his companion, said:

"I am now plain Charlie Williams, the ranchman. Remember this!"

"We will pay a visit to my ranch first, and then go down and see how things are at Fort Marco."

"Yes, sir."

The girl's heart throbbed wildly as she spoke.

She felt that the opportunity had now arrived when her cousin could be rescued.

All she had to do was to turn the villain over to the soldiers at the fort and then lead them to the outlaws' hidden cave.

No wonder, then, that she was a trifle nervous as she rode along with Capt. Charlie.

The ranch was reached in short order, and after seeing and hearing that everything was all right there, the captain and his young recruit rode off toward the fort.

As they neared the military headquarters Lizzie became more nervous than ever.

"What is the matter?" demanded her companion.

"Nothing. Only this is a stolen horse I am riding, and I am afraid some one might recognize it."

"Nonsense! You did not steal it from the fort, did you?"

"No; from Peakville," was the untruthful reply.

"Well, then, you needn't be alarmed. Come on."

Away they galloped, right up to the fort, halting right in front of the house Lizzie lived in.

A detachment of soldiers was outside undergoing a drill, and, losing all control of herself, the disguised girl rode up to them and exclaimed:

"Arrest that man! He——"

But Capt. Charlie was equal to the emergency, and before she could finish the sentence he wheeled his horse and galloped away like the wind.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE RETREAT CANNOT BE FOUND.

"Deceived, by thunder!" exclaimed Capt. Charlie as he sank the spurs into his steed and darted from the spot. "I had an idea that boy was all right, I did."

The villain knew that he had not a moment to lose, for he felt that the soldiers would surely start in pursuit the moment the boy made his statement to an officer.

He was mounted on a very swift animal, and he almost flew in the direction of the hidden retreat.

He felt that it was his duty to go to the ranch and tell the two men on guard there to leave, but there was no time for that now. He must get to headquarters at once and prepare for an attack.

At the expiration of half a minute he glanced over his shoulder and had the satisfaction of learning that the pursuit had not started yet.

"They'll never catch me!" he muttered between his clinched teeth. "Nor will they find the cave when they come to look for it. It is lucky that I made provision for just such an occasion as this will be. When next I lay eyes on that boy I'll put a bullet through his treacherous heart."

Capt. Charlie never allowed his horse to slacken speed once.

But when the ravine was reached he brought him down to a trot.

He knew that his pursuers—if he had any—must be at least a mile behind him.

A few minutes later he entered the retreat.

"Get to work at once, boys!" he called out. "The soldiers will be down here upon us in less than a quarter of an hour. That boy, Jack Buzzard, has proved a traitor."

Had the cave tumbled in the men could not have been more surprised.

"We must close the entrance," went on the captain. "It must be closed forever, too! Come on! We haven't a moment to lose!"

Out into the stable part of the retreat the whole crowd dashed.

Capt. Charlie led the way into the passage.

Close to the vine-covered entrance, and taking up a portion of the passage, was a huge boulder.

The captain paused near this.

"We must roll that over," he said. "According to my calculations, if this is rolled over it will fill up the hole to perfection. Now then, boys, with a will!"

All hands placed their shoulders against the monster stone, and when the word was given they let out their strength.

Crash! Thud! The boulder rolled over and effectually blocked the entrance.

A portion of it went entirely through and touched the vines that hung over the cliff.

"There!" exclaimed the outlaw leader, "I'll wager that Jack Buzzard will not be able to even show the soldiers where the entrance was!"

Back into the main cave the villains made their way.

"Captain," said one of them, "did it occur to you that we are in here now with no way to get out? We couldn't move that boulder away in a month."

"I know that," was the reply. "We are all right, for we can make another and better way out in less than half an hour."

"How?"

"Come, and I will show you."

Back into the portion of the cave that Fannie Gunter's prison was located in, the captain led his men.

Placing his finger against the rough, rocky wall, he said:

"There is a cave the other side of this which opens into the waters of the Blackwater River. A hole can be forced through here in a very short time, for the rock is soft and easy to crumble."

"Wonderful!" cried Capt. Charlie's lieutenant, and the rest of the outlaws echoed the exclamation.

At this juncture the man who had been left near the boulder came running in.

"The soldiers are outside in the ravine!" he said.

"Ah!" retorted the outlaw captain. "What are they up to?"

"Looking for the entrance—that's all. Young Jack Buzzard is with them, for I heard his voice."

"Well, let everybody remain as quiet as a sleeping lamb. The confounded fools will soon become so badly puzzled that they will take young Buzzard for a liar and then they'll go away."

The villain was right when he said this, for, after a vain search up and down the ravine for an hour, the soldiers took their departure.

As yet Lizzie Haverhill had not disclosed her identity, and when the officer in command ordered his men to return to the fort, adding that the boy had been trying to hoax them, she thought it time to act.

"Lieutenant," she said, riding up to him, "don't you know me? I am Lizzie Haverhill, Gen. Gunter's niece!"

"What?" cried the astounded officer.

"I am telling the truth. Don't you recognize me? There! How about it now?"

She threw off her hat and loosened her hair.

"Ex—excuse me, Miss Haverhill!" stammered the lieutenant. "The excitement caused by your startling declaration at the fort was no doubt the cause of my failure to recognize you. A thousand pardons!"

"And you believe what I said about Capt. Charlie Williams and his band of outlaws?"

"Yes, Miss Haverhill; I certainly do."

"Well, I tell you again that the hidden cave is located somewhere in this ravine, and that Fannie, the general's daughter, is a prisoner there. I have not been an inmate of the headquarters of the villainous band for several days for nothing. I know the place is right around here somewhere."

"Could it not possibly be in another ravine, Miss Haverhill?"

Lizzie thought a moment.

"Yes, sir, it could. But I am positive this is the ravine," she replied.

"Well, there are several just such looking places in this rather wild section; suppose we examine them?"

"Very well."

Lizzie took her place at the lieutenant's side, and the detachment rode off.

Two hours' search failed to locate a ravine that looked altogether like the one the girl had rode out of with Capt. Charlie, and she still stuck to it that she had led them to the right place at first.

She had not been aware of the fact that the vine-covered entrance could be effectually closed in so short a time, and she could be naught else but puzzled.

At the suggestion of the lieutenant, they returned to the fort to report to the commanding officer.

Lizzie found her uncle suffering from an attack of the gout.

Between the disease and the kidnaping of his daughter he had worried himself thin.

He was greatly surprised when Lizzie presented herself to him in her regular attire and told her story from beginning to end.

"That villain of a ranchman!" he exclaimed. "I never suspected such a thing of him. Well, Fannie shall be taken away from him if the artillery has to go down there to do it! I will be able to get out myself to-morrow. But in the meantime I will have notices of a reward posted. Perhaps a bait of \$5,000 would do something."

The news soon got through Blackwater that Lizzie Haverhill had been in the outlaws' hidden retreat in the character of a boy, and that she had escaped and brought the news that the general's daughter was a prisoner there.

But the people did not learn that Capt. Charlie Williams, the ranchman, was the leader of the villainous band. The general thought it best to keep that part of it a secret for a while.

CHAPTER IX.

ROLL ACCIDENTALLY MAKES A DISCOVERY.

Roll Smith rode to Blackwater on the locomotive with Dell the next day.

He was disguised as a track inspector, and took the part well.

"I wish you better luck this trip," said the young engineer as the train started.

The detective nodded and then made his way leisurely after the passengers who were leaving the depot.

The first saloon he reached he went inside to get what information he could.

In less than five minutes he heard the story about the general's niece.

Roll thought he was in luck.

"I must see that young lady," he said to himself. "I'll go up to Fort Marco and call on her."

After lingering a few minutes longer in an unconcerned manner, the detective left the saloon and started up the hill for the fort.

On his arrival he had considerable difficulty in getting an audience with Miss Haverhill, but he was persistent, and at length he was ushered in.

"What is it you wish?" questioned the girl.

"Here is my card."

He handed it over to her, and Lizzie read:

"ROLLIN SMITH,
"Detective,
"Canto, Nev."

"That is the only one I have with me," he said. "I don't generally carry cards with me, unless I am looking for a case. I am glad I had this one, however, as it is an easy way to introduce myself."

Lizzie bowed.

"You are in the employ of the railroad company, then, I presume?"

"Exactly; but it is not known who or what I am, outside of a very few persons."

"Oh, well, I can keep a secret. You need have no fears on my part, Mr. Smith."

"Thank you, Miss Haverhill."

"You are going to try to break up the outlaw band and rescue my cousin, are you not?"

"Yes. I came to you to get what information I could before going down there."

"I shall be pleased to tell you all I know."

"If you can make a rough drawing of the interior of the place it will be of the greatest service to me."

"I can do that, I think," and producing pencil and paper, the girl soon made a drawing of Capt. Charlie's headquarters, as she remembered it.

"There it is, and there is the way to get in," she said. "But, still, for all that, no entrance can be found now."

"Is that so?" and the detective looked surprised.

"The vines are there, or ones just like them, but they cover nothing but solid rock. I returned from there but a short time ago with a detachment from the fort. We searched high and low, but without success."

"Perhaps I will have better success."

"I hope so, Mr. Smith. I know how my poor cousin must feel. She has one friend there, though, and that is the Indian girl who stays with her all the time to attend to her wants."

"I am glad to hear that. Describe the Indian girl to me, and tell me all about the place, please."

Lizzie did so in plain, concise language.

When the two parted they thoroughly understood each other, and, what was more, they were very much interested in each other.

Roll made his way back to the depot.

Then he walked slowly along the track in the direction of Blackwater Gap, apparently examining the rails and ties as he went.

When he came to a bend in the river, which came pretty close to the embankment of the track, he approached it and proceeded to wash his hands in the black looking water.

While he was thus engaged he noticed some pieces of freshly broken wood drifting listlessly by.

Picking up a long stick, he reached out and pulled one of the pieces in.

"Some one is either building or tearing down up the river," he mused. "I guess I'll go up and see what is going on."

Following the bank of the river, he soon came to a growth of shrubbery.

Then he was able to proceed without being observed.

Roll took this walk more to kill time than anything else. The sun was getting pretty close to the horizon, and he did not propose to go fooling around the entrance to the outlaws' retreat until it was dark.

He did not dream that the broken splinters of wood would serve as any clew to the villains, but such was the case, as the sequel will show.

On kept the brave young fellow, following the tortuous windings of the stream, and at length he found himself ascending a steep, rocky incline.

The current of the river was mighty swift here, and Roll reckoned that a man would have more than he bargained for if he undertook to row upstream at that point.

Just above, the river ran through a narrow cleft in the mountain, and it was here that the detective came to a halt.

The water was very shallow here—not over two feet deep at the most—and flowed over a level bottom of hard sand and gravel.

To proceed farther he must wade, for on either side perpendicular walls of rock arose.

Roll took a seat on a rock and gazed in silence at the water that was so still at that point and so fierce a few yards below.

Suddenly he detected the noise made by a pick.

In an instant he was all attention.

He listened, and not only heard the sounds repeated, but a faint splashing, as particles of dirt and stone falling into the water.

The detective no longer hesitated about wading into the water.

Though the water was of a very dark color, he could see the bottom, and where he could see that he was not afraid to go.

Noiselessly he picked his way along, the noises he had heard sounding nearer at every step.

Ten feet more and he came to an abrupt halt.

And no wonder, for he saw a pick in the hands of an unseen man slowly enlarging a hole in the crumbling rock!

The spot was on his left, not over twenty feet distant, and close to the level of the water.

Roll Smith drew back against the rock and put on his "thinking-cap."

"Eureka!" he exclaimed at length, under his breath. "I see it all now. Why didn't I think of this before? The outlaws have closed up the entrance from the ravine and are making a new one here!"

CHAPTER X.

"GO SLOW!"

Capt. Charlie paid a visit to his captive shortly after he had explained to his men how they would have another means of entrance and egress to the cave.

Fannie was still in pretty fair spirits, as she had not

learned what had taken place since she wrote the note to her cousin.

As a change in his programme, the outlaw captain did not press his suit at all this time, taking it for granted that the girl was surely coming around to his way of thinking.

He was as polite and soft-spoken to Fannie as any knight of the olden days could have been, and when he left the girl's prison he was in an excellent humor.

It was quite evident that he wished to gain the girl's consent before he married her, and that he wanted to make her love him as a wife should a husband.

But he was badly deceived when he thought he was making any progress in that direction.

"Boys," he said, as he addressed his few stanch followers, "tap a keg of whiskey. I feel good, and there is no use in keeping it away from you. I feel that I was born under a lucky star, and there is nothing but good luck in store for me and those who stick to me. Pass around the liquor and let's drink to success before we make another entrance to our snug retreat."

His order was promptly obeyed, and soon three rounds of drinks had been passed to the men.

Of course this served to make them more bold and daring than ever, and when the picks and axes were brought out to cut a hole through the wall, all hands wanted to do the job.

But Capt. Charlie selected two of the men, who had been used to handling such tools, and appointed them to do the job.

The work was begun and the liquor was passed around freely as it progressed.

In an hour the opening had been made and the inky waters of the Blackwater River flowed past it.

During the job several pieces of timber were broken while being used to pry aside the loosened rock, and these fell into the river.

The outlaws never dreamed that the pieces of wood might be the means of giving them away. In fact, if such a thing had been suggested, even Capt. Charlie would have laughed at the idea.

A piece of canvas was hung over the opening at its completion, and then, in a spirit of recklessness, the captain proposed that they should go out by the new way that very night.

"We will rob the late train," he said, "and capture the young engineer of No. 5."

"Good—good!" exclaimed his followers.

Having decided upon this, the outlaw leader began to think of a plan to carry out the idea.

At length he hit upon one.

"We must wreck the train!"

This is what he said.

"How?" asked his lieutenant.

"We will remove a couple of the rails just before the train gets to the gap. A couple of men can keep on the watch while the rest of us do the job. Remember, when the engine goes off the track the boy engineer must be captured, whether he is dead or alive! We must do the work quickly, too, and make ourselves scarce."

The time between then and half an hour before the train was due was spent in jollification.

Then every member of the band, save one left on guard, sallied forth to do the murderous job.

At this moment Dell Watson was at the throttle of his engine, approaching the Blackwater station, entirely ignorant of the plot against his life and those of the people on his train.

Dell leaned out of the cab window in the hope of seeing Roll Smith upon the platform ready to go back to Canto with him.

But the detective was not there.

Puff-puff! Puff-puff! No. 5 started to convey the train to Canto.

The fireman Dell had was a new man. He was well acquainted with his duties, but very nervous.

As Dell opened the throttle wider the fireman stepped over to him and exclaimed, hoarsely:

"Go slow here; you can't tell what those outlaws might be up to. I have a presentiment that I am going to die to-night. Go slow, will you?"

"All right," retorted the young engineer, who saw that the man was in earnest. "I'll do it to please you. We are pretty well protected, though, as there are a dozen armed men aboard the train who would like to get in a scrimmage with the outlaws."

As the train rounded the bend and began puffing up the grade near the gap the fireman suddenly turned as white as a sheet.

"Look!" he cried, wildly. "I told you we had better go slow. Stop her, for God's sake!"

The nervous man's keen eyes had noticed that a couple of rails were missing from the track.

Dell saw it at about the same time, and he immediately reversed his engine.

But slow as they were going, he knew the train could not be stopped before the locomotive left the rails.

Wildly the whistle blew for down brakes, and then the boy engineer got ready to jump.

He did not intend to leave his post unless he felt the locomotive toppling over.

It is not a hero who would remain in the cab of an engine to be crushed or scalded to death when no good could be accomplished from it.

Dell had done what could be done already. He had reversed the engine and the train was slowing down.

All this happened very quickly.

"Jump!" called out the boy to his fireman as the forward wheels of the truck left the rails and struck the ties with a grinding smash.

"Not till you do," was the quavering reply.

Gr-r-i-n-d! Bump—bump! The train came to a standstill just as the driving wheels of the locomotive left the rails.

As quick as a flash Dell shut off steam.

Then he prepared to jump off, for he felt the locomotive swaying as though it might topple over at any moment.

Just as he let go his hold from the brass handle on the cab a pistol shot rang out and the fireman dropped dead.

The man's presentiment had come true.

The next thing the young engineer knew he was seized in a viselike grip, a blanket was thrown over his head, and he was whisked away through the darkness of the night.

CHAPTER XI.

DELL DOES SOME MORE DIGGING.

Though he was pretty well prepared for an attack, Dell Watson was completely surprised when he was seized and almost smothered.

He struggled to get free from his captors when he felt himself being carried away, but it was of no avail.

The men who were carrying him evidently were in a great hurry, for they were running as fast as they could under the circumstances.

He was carried but a short distance, and then he felt himself pulled through an opening of some sort.

In the next four or five minutes Dell was held tightly, and then the blanket was thrown off his head.

At first he was unable to see a thing in the rather faint light that pervaded the place, but gradually his eyes became accustomed to it, and he soon made out that he was in a big cave.

That he was in the retreat of the outlaws of Blackwater Gap he knew only too well.

Half a dozen men were gathered about him, all wearing masks to conceal their features.

Knives and revolvers gleamed at the boy on all sides, but he remained wonderfully cool.

A man came up who was no other than Capt. Charlie.

"Put the prisoner in the black hole," he said. "We will attend to his case in the morning. He has pulled the throttle of a locomotive for the last time, so we will give him a few hours to spend in thinking before his journey to the unknown begins!"

The captain made a motion with his hand, and then Dell was dragged across the cave and thrust into a small opening that was as dark as the grave itself.

A slab of stone was then put over the hole and wedged into place with a log.

For several minutes Dell remained on the ground in a sitting position, and then he felt through his clothes to see if his captors had taken everything from him.

His revolver and cartridges were gone, but his pocket-knife was still there.

The boy arose to his feet.

Then a further search revealed his match safe.

As calmly as possible he struck a light.

He was confined in a space not over six or seven feet square, the sides of which were composed of rock and clay.

It was like being buried alive to be in such dismal quarters as these, but the young engineer did not sit down and cry—not by any means.

He had hopes of getting out of the scrape he was in, and he resolved to do his utmost to accomplish that end.

The simple knowledge that he was not to be interfered with until morning gave him courage.

When the match had burned out Dell gave a nod and said to himself:

"I'll see if I can't dig myself out of here, for as near as I can judge, this wall on the right is a continuation of the one where I was first dragged through the hole."

Creeping close to the slab of stone that held him a prisoner in the hole, he listened.

When he had satisfied himself that the outlaws would not be apt to bother him again that night, he opened his knife and got in readiness to dig.

On the wall he deemed to be the side he had come in from, he began operations.

The clay was crumbly and yielding, and he fairly made it fly.

Steadily the brave boy worked away, lighting a match occasionally to see how he was progressing, and at the end of half an hour he had dug a hole large enough to admit his body three feet into the wall.

Suddenly he gave a violent start.

Some dirt had crumbled away, and he saw a faint streak of light.

He was now inside the hole he had dug, and he quickly drew his face close to the streak of light.

Then it was that he discovered a rough board partition.

The light came through a crack.

Dell found he could look through this easily enough.

He did so, and gave another start of surprise.

He had not been digging his way out of the outlaws' den at all, but into the chamber in which the fair Fannie Gunter was confined!

On a couch of skins two forms lay.

One was Fannie, and the other Red Rose, her Indian attendant.

Dell had never seen the general's daughter, but he knew it was certainly she.

After a moment of thought he resolved to run the risk of waking the sleeping couple.

He thrust the blade of his knife between the crack and caused some dirt to fall inside.

The noise was very slight, but sufficient to arouse the Indian girl.

She was upon her feet in an instant, noiselessly and catlike.

A revolver appeared in her hand, and in a listening attitude she stood in the center of the apartment.

"Who dares to try and intrude into the chamber of the fair white lily?" she demanded in a savage whisper.

"A friend," retorted Dell, in a very low voice. "I did not mean to come in here; I am trying to dig my way outside."

Red Rose stood a moment in a doubting attitude.

"Wait a minute," she said. "I will wake my mistress, and see what she says."

She was as good as her word, and two minutes later Fannie Gunter was at the crack, her face lit up with the hope that the Indian girl's brief explanation had inspired.

"Who is it?" she whispered, tremblingly.

Dell quickly told her who he was and what he was doing there.

"I believe every word you say," said the fair prisoner. "Red Rose, we will help him to get in here!"

The Indian girl nodded, and then the two went to work at the boards.

It was not such a difficult job to remove a couple of them, and five minutes later the young engineer was in the prison of the fair captive.

CHAPTER XII.

A DESPERATE DUEL.

Detective Roll Smith thought he had done enough for one day when he located the new entrance to the hidden retreat of the outlaws of Blackwater Gap.

He studied the lay of the land carefully, and then concluded to go to Fort Marco and report what he had learned to Lizzie Haverhill.

Somehow he had begun to think that he could not go ahead with anything now, unless he consulted her.

The whole amount of it was he had fallen in love with the girl.

She was young, pretty and accomplished. But Roll did not fall in love with her for any of these things. He was a detective, and she was something on that line.

That is why he felt himself drawn to her.

On his return it was past eleven o'clock, and too late to go to Blackwater that night.

So Roll went to his boarding house.

But he was at the depot for the first train in the morning, and learned that the late train had been derailed at Blackwater Gap the night before.

The news had just arrived, as there had been no telegraph operator at either Blackwater or Canto at such a late hour.

Roll listened to the full particulars, and his face turned pale when he learned that No. 5's fireman had been killed and the engineer missing.

"The outlaws have got him, as sure as fate," he thought. "Well, I must get down there as soon as possible."

The superintendent had already summoned a dozen deputy sheriffs and about thirty men to go down and get rails under the helpless locomotive.

The train was ready to go, so Roll boarded it in a very uneasy frame of mind.

* * * * *

As Dell Watson drew himself to his full height in the center of the apartment, Fannie Gunter felt like throwing herself in his arms.

But of course she did not do this.

The couple gazed at each other for a moment, and then the young engineer held out his hand.

"Miss Gunter, I am glad I have found you. You shall make your escape with me," he said.

A cloud came over the fair girl's face.

"How can we get out of here?" she asked.

"The same way that I got in, or by a similar way, rather. What time is it?"

"Ten minutes to four," replied Fannie, as she looked at her watch.

"Well, we still have about three-quarters of an hour

before daylight. Does either of these walls continue along with the one the hole is cut through?"

"This one!" exclaimed Red Rose, in her low, musical voice.

"Ah!" and Dell examined the place indicated.

A sort of rough drapery hung over it to hide its irregularities and crude aspect, and, pulling this aside, he found that, for the most part, it was composed of clay.

"We will dig our way through!" he cried. "It cannot be very far to the stream of water."

"That so," and the Indian girl nodded her head in a satisfied way. "Me help!"

She drew a knife from an aperture in the other wall, and when the boy had marked out a rude circle where he was going to begin at the hole, she set to work with a will.

Half an hour of desperate work and they had gone a distance of two feet through the wall.

The hole they were making was about twenty inches in diameter, and was amply large enough for a person to squeeze through.

But how much farther would it have to be dug to accomplish that purpose?

That was the question Dell asked himself as he worked away in feverish haste.

Just as Fannie in a trembling whisper informed him that it was a quarter to five, he found that he could dig no farther.

A rock cut off all further progress!

Dell stepped back into the room with something like a groan of dismay.

"What is the matter?" inquired Fannie in an anxious voice.

She was all ready to leave at an instant's notice, and the young engineer's manner put a sudden damper on her spirits.

"A solid rock is in our way!"

Just then the worst thing of all happened.

Red Rose allowed her revolver to drop to the floor, causing it to go off with a loud report.

Almost instantly there was a sound of hurrying feet outside in the cave.

"We are lost!" cried Fannie, wildly.

Acting on a sudden impulse, Dell seized one of the planks that had been taken from the wall to allow his entrance to the apartment.

With all the power he could command he thrust it into the hole against the rock.

The effect was wonderful.

The rock gave way and fell into the shallow depths of Blackwater River with a loud splash!

At the same instant a streak of daylight darted into the apartment.

The Indian girl was now equal to the occasion.

Hastily producing a rope, she wound it about her and told Fannie to tie her so her arms were powerless.

This the girl did, hardly knowing what it was for.

"Go out!" said Red Rose to Dell. "You have a chance; we will wait. I will say it was you who tied me and tried to take off the white rose from the fort!"

The young engineer had no time to argue the question for even then a key was rattling in the lock of the door.

With the big knife in his hand he plunged through the opening and dropped floundering into the river.

He had scarcely done so when out came another form.

It was Capt. Charlie. He had entered Fannie's prison just in time to see Dell's feet disappear through the opening.

Bound to capture the intruder, he darted after him.

Dell was nearly blinded by the water, but he got upon his feet with amazing quickness.

He still held the knife in his hand, and as he saw the outlaw captain scrambling to his feet he darted toward him.

He felt that it was life or death now, and he meant to kill the man to save his own life.

Strange to say, when Capt. Charlie got up he held a knife in his hand.

His revolver had been lost in his sudden tumble into the river.

He faced the desperate young engineer, and deftly avoided a vicious lunge from him.

Then the blades crossed, and the fight began.

Knee-deep in the water, the two men kept at it.

Being older and stronger than his opponent, Capt. Charlie had a decided advantage.

He kept forcing Dell back, but try as he might, he could not touch him with the knife.

Back, back, went the brave engineer of No. 5.

He realized that he must flee pretty soon, as he could not cope with the villain before him.

There was a savage grin on the face of Capt. Charlie.

He was forcing the boy back to the brink of the little falls, step by step.

And Dell was unconscious of the fact.

Suddenly the water began to grow deeper, and then—

His heels struck against some slanting rocks, and Dell Watson tumbled headlong over the little cataract!

CHAPTER XIII.

UNDER THE CATARACT.

When Dell felt himself falling over the cataract, he knew not what had happened or where he was going.

Down he went, striking the deep pool at the bottom.

Luckily for him he had escaped being rendered uncon-

scious by not coming in contact with the rocks, and now his only danger lay in being drowned.

Instinctively the boy struggled to reach the surface, and up he went, though very slowly, through the agitated water.

At length his head came above the surface, and he found he could breathe, though he could see nothing.

He started to swim, but almost the instant he did so his hands came in contact with a shelving of rock.

It did not take much of an effort to draw himself upon the rock, and when he got there he found that he was enveloped in a cloud of mist.

Feeling his way, Dell crawled back from the water.

Presently he found himself in a place that was comparatively dry.

Then as he arose to his feet he found he could see fairly well.

"I am in a cave under the little waterfall!" exclaimed the young engineer. "I must have been sucked back by the eddies. Well, I ought to be very thankful that I am no worse off. When the outlaw found that he could best me he drove me back to the falls purposely. He thinks I am dead, but he will find that I am very much alive before long. That pretty girl must be rescued, and I am going to be the one to do it."

In his way of thinking there was only one thing left for him to do.

That was to run forward and dive headlong through the body of falling water.

Of course there was a great risk attached to this, as he might land upon some rocks and dash his brains out.

But it was worth trying.

Backing to the rear wall of the little cave, he poised himself for a second, and then darted forward like a racer.

As his right foot touched the rock at the water's edge he leaped high into the air and plunged headfirst into the body of descending water.

The roar of the cataract drowned the noise of any splash. Dell heard nothing, but he felt a heavy weight shove him downward, and then he was struggling in the water.

With all the power he could command he started to swim.

Up he came to the surface, and then a cry of joy left his lips.

He had been successful, for the cataract was behind him!

A few lusty strokes and he was out of the churning water.

In less than two minutes from the time of his daring leap he was upon the river bank.

Soaked and unarmed as he was, it was quite natural for him to make a bee line for the railroad track.

He could hear the sounds made by spikes being driven, and he knew a gang must be repairing the track.

A minute or two later he burst through the cover of the trees, and saw the crowd at the scene of the accident.

Roll Smith, who had come down on the first train in the morning, was there, saw him coming, and with a yell of delight rushed to meet him.

"Dell Watson—alive and well!" he shouted.

"Where have you been?" inquired the delighted boy.

"I have been imprisoned in a cave under a cataract," replied Dell. "I just succeeded in getting out."

"Come up in the cab, as he saw No. 5 was back upon the rails, and I'll tell you all about it."

The detective obeyed, and soon he knew exactly what the young engineer had passed through.

"Whew!" exclaimed Roll, at the conclusion of the narrative, "that knocks all of my experiences into a cocked hat! Well, you must telegraph to the superintendent that you want the rest of the day and night off. We must get Gen. Gunter's daughter out of the outlaws' den, and then the capture of the gang will be easy enough."

"How can I get off when my engine is here, and will be ready to start in a short time now?"

"I'll fix that. Come with me to the depot."

"No; you go and do the telegraphing. I am in charge of my engine now, and will not leave it until another man is put in my place."

"All right."

Roll started off, and in about fifteen minutes he returned.

"The orders from the superintendent are that you bank the fires on No. 5 and let her and the cars here be towed to Canto by the other train. Here is the dispatch; read it for yourself.

"Hayes has received a dispatch also, and so has the other conductor. So you can go off as soon as you fix your fire."

"It won't take me very long to do that."

Half an hour later Dell and Roll were entering a small clothing store in Blackwater.

It was necessary that the young engineer should have some dry clothing, and as his friend had ample money with him, he loaned him enough to fit him out.

What little money Dell had with him when captured, the outlaws had taken charge of.

"You can easy see there is a girl in the case," observed the detective as he surveyed Dell's necktie.

"Am I fixed up more than usual?" was the reply.

"Well a trifle more than when you are running your engine. Here, take this revolver. I have the one I took from the outlaw captain."

"All right. Now to business. Fannie Gunter must be rescued, and we will take the Indian girl along with her for her faithfulness."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE OUTLAW'S TERMS.

The ruse the Indian girl had played upon her employer worked to perfection.

When Capt. Charlie had returned to the prison of Fannie Gunter, after forcing Dell Watson over the cataract, he had found one of his men guarding the opening in the wall, and Red Rose lying on the heap of skins, apparently helpless.

Fannie sat weeping close beside her. Her hopes of escape had been dashed to the ground, and she felt anxious about the fate of the daring young engineer, who had made such a noble effort to save her.

Capt. Charlie did not say a word to her, but simply ordered his men to construct safer quarters for his fair captive, and liberate the Indian girl.

The man who untied the bonds of Red Rose did not appear to notice that she was not very securely tied. But not one of the outlaws thought she was anything but loyal to her employer.

The work of erecting another prison began at a point near the stable.

After it was finished, the outlaw captain lost no time in getting Fannie and her attendant into their new quarters, and when this had been accomplished, he cautioned Red Rose to keep a strict watch upon her mistress, and then sat down to think.

At the end of ten minutes he arose to his feet.

"I have it!" he exclaimed. "Four of you must venture outside and shoot down the two fools who are prying upon us. Do not attempt to capture them, but shoot them down on sight!"

Being a reckless lot of villains, there was no trouble in getting four of them to volunteer to do the job.

"You have got to keep your eyes open," said the captain. "Though they are young fellows, they can't be taught much about taking care of themselves. I will give a hundred dollars apiece for the right hands of the two meddlesome fools!"

A drink of liquor apiece, and the four villains ventured forth from the cave, nerved to the task that had been assigned to them.

At this very moment Dell and Roll were on the other side of the river, concealed in a clump of bushes.

They watched the men with great satisfaction as they emerged so cautiously from their den.

"They have been sent out after us, I think," Roll whispered.

"Yes," returned Dell, "there is no doubt of it."

"Well, we must turn the tables on them."

"All right."

"We will follow them up, and when a good chance comes, take them prisoners."

"I am ready to do anything you say," said the young engineer.

The four outlaws stood in the shallow water for fully a minute, and then made their way slowly to the bank and got upon dry ground.

Instead of thinking about crossing the river, they made their way up and around to the place where Capt. Charlie had surprised the detective.

The moment they had turned an angle of the cliff, Dell and Roll started after them.

Entirely unaware of this, the quartet of villains began searching about the vicinity.

When they got into the dense undergrowth that lined the mountainside, our two young friends got much nearer to them.

Presently they heard the noise of hoofs in the ravine below.

Dell and Roll pricked up their ears.

"Soldiers from the fort," said the latter, with a nod.

The outlaws must have thought so, too, for they at once beat a hasty retreat to report to those inside the cave.

The four outlaws rushed toward the two they were searching for, and the engineer and detective had scarcely time to drop from their sight.

On a run in single file the outlaws came.

Roll saw that they must pass within two feet of them, and a desperate resolve came upon him.

He nudged his companion, and then——

The head man was opposite them!

Out shot the detective's hand, seizing the fellow firmly about the ankle.

At the same time he gave an imitation of an angered dog.

Down went the outlaw flat on his stomach, and unable to check their hurried rush, the other three piled on top of him!

Revolvers in hand, our two daring young friends sprang to their feet.

"Lie right where you are, or you are dead men!" sternly commanded Roll.

Thinking that a whole troop of soldiers had surprised them, the outlaws did so.

The detective discharged his revolver to attract the attention of those they had heard in the ravine, and the villains trembled, thinking that a bullet had found its way to the heart of one of their number.

A moment later the hurried tramp of many feet was heard, and the next instant a squad of soldiers on foot burst upon the scene.

"Officer, take charge of these men—they are outlaws!" cried the detective, pointing to the prostrate ruffians.

The officer in command comprehended the situation in short order, and in less time than it takes to write it, the outlaws were disarmed and bound hand and foot.

Roll promptly showed his badge, and then the lieutenant had a short consultation with him.

The result was that the soldiers went into camp, and brought their horses there from the ravine.

A messenger was sent to the fort for the general, who was now able to ride his horse, and Roll started for the track to bring the deputies up.

One hour later everything was in readiness to start the siege upon the outlaws.

Gen. Gunter had arrived, and was in a state of nervous excitement.

He had always been noted for his bravery, but the life and honor of his daughter were now at stake, and he hated to attack the outlaws for that reason.

After a while he determined to try a flag of truce on the villains, and give them a chance to surrender without any blood being shed.

So a man was accordingly sent to the river with a flag of truce, and instructions to inform the outlaws that if they surrendered they should have fair trials at the county courthouse.

Otherwise they would be captured by force, and if one hair of the girl prisoner's head was harmed, they would suffer additionally for it.

The man carrying the emblem of peace was a brave fellow, and he walked boldly through the shallow water and came to a halt within a few yards of the entrance, which was now securely closed.

"Hello!" he called out.

He was immediately answered by Capt. Charlie, and then a rather lengthy conversation ensued.

When the messenger came back everybody was over-anxious to learn the result.

"Well?" demanded the general, after the man had given the military salute.

"The outlaw captain says he will never surrender, general."

"Ah! What else?"

"He also says that unless you and your men retire within one hour he will kill your daughter and throw her body in the river for you to fish out! These are his only terms. If you choose to blow up the cave, your daughter will perish with the villains!"

CHAPTER XV.

FOILED!

Capt. Charlie heard the cavalrymen when they rode through the ravine, or rather his man who was watching at the blocked entrance did so.

When his four men failed to show up a few minutes later, he took it for granted that they had been captured.

"The fools!" he muttered: "why couldn't they have been careful? It looks now as though the crisis had arrived. But there is one thing that will save us yet. Fannie Gunter must arrange it."

On the tiptoe of excitement the villainous band waited.

At length the man bearing the flag of truce came, and the captain was notified.

He put on a very bold front, and sent the message described at the end of the last chapter.

"That will fetch the old man!" he muttered. "He fairly dotes on his daughter, and he will forget his duty as a commander of the fort."

With something like a smile on his face, he made his way to the quarters of his fair prisoner.

"Fannie," said he, "things are getting desperate. You must consent to marry me to-night, or you will die along with the rest of us. A band of deputy sheriffs and a squad of soldiers are outside, and they will blow the cave up with dynamite unless you marry me."

"Unless I marry you?" cried the girl, with flashing eyes. "Then, sir, let me tell you that I will die along with you and your foul band of murderers! I will never become your wife!"

"Listen! I have sent word to your father that unless the men outside are taken away from here in one hour, I will kill you and throw your body in the river. Think of it! Kill you! I may be driven to keep my word."

Fannie laughed hysterically.

"Do it!" she almost screamed. "I dare you!"

Capt. Charlie took a step toward her.

Then his whole manner softened.

"I cannot," he said softly. "I cannot. I was only making a bluff. I love you, Fannie, and you must be my wife."

Red Rose was back in a corner watching the outlaw as a hawk watches its prey.

If Capt. Charlie could have seen the look in her sallow-black eyes he would have shot her on the spot, for one look at her would have told him that she hated him—ay, felt like murdering him.

If he had made a move to put his hands upon Fannie, it is more than likely she would have stabbed him to the heart with the gleaming knife she held beneath a fold in her skirt.

But the love-struck villain did not know this. He stood

in silent admiration before the beautiful white girl for a moment, and then, without another word, left the room.

A long-drawn sigh of relief came from the Indian girl's lips, as the door closed.

Fannie turned to her quickly.

"What is the matter, Red Rose?" she asked.

"Me pretty near kill him that time," was the reply. "If he once touch you, then me cut his heart in two pieces!"

Fannie shuddered, but patted the faithful girl on the head.

"Red Rose," said she, after a pause, "we must get out of here. My father and the soldiers are outside. So is the young man who so nearly saved us last night."

"Me see what I can do. Wait!"

Red Rose had a key, and unlocking the door, she passed out.

She took a pail with her, under the pretext of getting some water.

In a few minutes she came back.

But instead of water being in the pail, she dumped from it a man's coat, hat and trousers!

"When time come to go, White Rose put these on," she said.

Fannie nodded approvingly.

"Now me show something else," and stooping near the door, the Indian girl took hold of something and began drawing it slowly in.

At first Fannie thought it was but an iron rod, but a second glance told her that it was a long auger, such as is used in boring in the earth by prospectors.

"What are you going to do with that, Red Rose?"

"Me find by door outside. No man looking. Bring in here and make hole above, so your father and soldiers can see in here."

"My, Red Rose, you certainly have a great head on you! Who would ever have thought of such a thing? I know the soldiers are almost directly above this cave, for I have heard noises above ever since before that scoundrel of a captain came here."

"Me hear noises, too. That's why think to make hole."

"Well, let us get at it right away."

Red Rose lost no time.

Springing upon the rough table that was in the center of the room, the Indian girl inserted the point of the auger in a small crevice, and then getting down again, began turning it.

It worked quite easily, and soon had penetrated to the depth of a couple of feet.

The face of Red Rose was aglow with excitement as she worked away, and Fannie watched her expectantly.

The auger was about ten feet long, and the rough, natural ceiling about twelve feet high.

Soon she was forced to get upon the table in order to reach it.

Just as she was thinking of putting a chair upon the table, she felt the point go through!

Instantly she withdrew the instrument, and looking up, Fannie saw daylight!

"Write note and tie in handkerchief."

Fannie hastened to do so.

Then, with deft fingers, her dark-skinned friend fastened the handkerchief to the point of the auger, and arranged it so it would unroll and flutter in the breeze as soon as it emerged above ground.

Fannie watched as if spellbound when she saw the handkerchief forced from sight.

It was easy enough to push it upward, as it was being forced up a crevice in the rock.

At length it was all the way up!

For fully ten minutes Red Rose held it, and then she drew the instrument down again.

The handkerchief was gone!

But there was no answering note!

The two girls looked blankly at each other.

The next instant a volley of shots rang out from above.

Then all was still again.

Five—six minutes passed.

Then the door of Fannie's prison opened without the least warning.

Capt. Charlie strode into the apartment, the handkerchief and note in his hand!

CHAPTER XVI.

ESCAPE?

"Halt!"

It was one of the guards who uttered the command.

One of the four outlaws could not have been tied very securely, for he had worked himself free and started to run away.

This happened but a short time after the soldiers and deputies had made their temporary headquarters on the level above the cave of the outlaws.

The escaping man was fully ten yards away before he was observed.

As the command to halt was uttered, the fellow stumbled and fell to the ground.

Lowering his gun, the guard started toward him.

But the next instant the outlaw sprang to his feet, grabbing a white object from the ground as he did so, and ran down the slope at breakneck speed.

Crack! The guard fired at the retreating form, and his action was immediately followed by more of the soldiers.

But none of the bullets hit the escaping desperado,

and before they could overtake him he had rounded the corner of the bluff, jumped into the shallow water of the river and disappeared.

He had taken desperate chances, but he had succeeded in reaching Capt. Charlie's headquarters, leaving his three companions still in the toils.

"Hello!" exclaimed the villain on guard, as he opened the barricade in answer to the regular summons and allowed the fellow to enter. "Where did you come from, Jack?"

But Jack was out of breath from his exertions and could not answer right away.

He threw himself on a bench and sought to gain his wind.

At this juncture Capt. Charlie came up.

"Speak out, man! What has happened?" said he.

"I—I got away f-f-from ther soldiers an' stumbled over this," was the reply, as a white handkerchief was held up.

The outlaw captain took the handkerchief in a mystified air.

"This is owned by a lady," he said. "Ah!"

A note pinned to the handkerchief caught his eye.

In an instant he was all attention.

When he had carefully scanned the contents of the note he rushed away without a word.

Thus it was that he burst in upon Fannie and Red Rose in such an unexpected manner.

"Aha!" he exclaimed as he looked at the dismayed pair; "so this is how it is, eh? Red Rose is quite an ingenious squaw, is she not, Miss Fannie? Well, she shall die for this! And you, my pretty one, shall become the outlaw's bride this very day! 'Tis dangerous for me to longer delay."

Like one in a dream the fair captive listened to the villain's words.

But not so with the Indian maiden. She was alive to the full situation, and with a dangerous glitter in her sloe-like eyes she surveyed the man who had hired her to come there and attend to the wants of his fair captive.

At that moment Capt. Charlie Williams was very near death, though he was hardly aware of it.

Red Rose possessed more than ordinary intelligence. She was an adept in working out a thought.

She was going to pour forth the contents of the revolver she held beneath a fold in her skirt, when it suddenly occurred to her that the time for Fannie to escape had really come.

She settled upon a plan of action almost instantly.

"You two-faced squaw, you shall die for the part you have taken in this!" thundered the leader of the outlaw band, as he stepped toward Fannie's champion.

"You die, if you say more words!" exclaimed the dark-

faced maiden, thrusting the muzzle of her weapon directly at Capt. Charlie's heart.

Had the roof of the cave fallen in, the villain could not have been more astounded.

"Don't speak!" went on Red Rose, her finger toying dangerously with the trigger of the revolver. "Hold up your hands, captain, or you will die like a dog."

The dangerous glitter in the girl's eye must have had something to do with it, for up went the outlaw's hands.

He was getting used to this, anyway, as he had experienced considerable of it lately.

"I hate you," Red Rose said, after a slight pause. "I feel that I am bound to kill you some time, if not now! White Rose, take his knife and pistol!"

Without a word Fannie did as directed.

"Give me his pistol."

Fannie handed the weapon over.

Red Rose took it by the muzzle with her left hand.

Then, before Fannie was aware of it, the handle of the heavy revolver struck Capt. Charlie's forehead with a dull thud.

It seemed almost impossible that the Indian girl could strike such a blow with her left hand. It would have felled an ox, almost.

As it was, the villainous captain of the outlaw band uttered a gasp and dropped to the floor in an insensible heap.

"I struck to kill him!" hissed Red Rose. "I would have shot him, but I didn't want the other bad men to hear the report. Put on the men's clothes I brought in, White Rose."

Not a little horrified at the Indian girl's actions, Fannie hurried to do her bidding.

She felt that Capt. Charlie was surely dead, but she had sense enough to think of gaining her liberty through the result of the killing.

She donned the trousers over her regular wearing apparel in short order, and while she did this, Red Rose removed the hat and coat of the unconscious man.

"Put these on and go on out," she said. "Run for the outside of the cave and jump into the water. The bad men will think you are the captain. I will scream when you go out if they try to stop you, and they will come here. Go!"

"No, no!" replied Fannie; "I will not go without you. You must go with me. I insist upon it."

"I will go," she simply said. "You must not talk. I will do the talking. Take the key and lock the door as we go out. Come!"

Fannie now no longer hesitated.

With the broad-brimmed hat well down over her face, she stepped boldly out of the prison, the Indian girl following her.

The outlaws were gathered close about the entrance and did not notice them till they were within a few feet of it.

The men looked at Red Rose in surprise, but did not notice the supposed captain.

"Me go out with captain to take message to Gen. Gunter," said the dark-skinned child of the forest.

As she said this one of the men opened the barricade and Fannie darted through.

As she passed them the outlaws discovered that she was not what she seemed and a howl of surprise went up.

But too late! Red Rose discharged her revolver point-blank in the faces of the villains, and with one mighty leap followed her mistress.

Neither of the girls knew exactly which way to turn in their anxiety to get away, and, unconscious of their danger, they floundered through the water toward the cataract.

As they neared it a pistol shot rang out from the entrance of the cave.

Red Rose staggered and fell forward in the water.

The next instant her body went whirling over the cataract, and before she knew it, Fannie Gunter lost her footing and followed!

CHAPTER XVII.

A FLAG OF TRUCE THAT FAILED.

When a guard had been well established about the vicinity of the cave, Dell and Roll took a walk to Blackwater depot and telegraphed to Superintendent Abbott at Canto just how matters stood.

The railroad official telegraphed back that as soon as the track was clear he would be down on a special locomotive, and that Dell Watson must hold himself in readiness to go on duty, as his services were sorely in need.

This put a damper on the spirits of the young engineer, as he was anxious to be instrumental in rescuing Fannie Gunter from the clutches of Capt. Charlie.

But he hoped that an explanation to Mr. Abbott might be the means of his getting permission to stay off duty until the case of the outlaws of Blackwater Gap was settled.

The detective promised to use his influence to help him out in the matter.

When the engineer and detective got back to the temporary camp of the cavalry and deputy sheriffs, they were just in time to learn of the escape of one of the four outlaws.

The pair lost no time in hurrying to the river.

They got there just thirty seconds too late to see Fannie and the Indian girl go whirling over the cataract.

They did see, however, two men standing in front of the entrance of the outlaws' cave, and a couple of bullets immediately whistled past their heads.

Dell and Roll lost no time in dodging back out of range.

"It appears that the villains are getting on the aggressive," observed the detective. "My! that was a close call on my part. That bullet did not miss my head over a couple of inches. I can hear it singing yet."

"The same here," answered Dell. "We must be a little careful. They are evidently getting desperate."

"If it wasn't for the young lady we would soon make short work of them," and Roll shook his head, showing how uneasy he felt.

"That is only too true," replied the young engineer.

The two made their way into the presence of the general and reported that it would be necessary to keep a sharper lookout in the vicinity of the river.

The old military man was in a state of nervous excitement over the captivity of his daughter, and he at once granted them permission to arrange the guards as they saw fit.

"I think, general," said Dell, "that if a little dynamite were used—just to show the outlaws how easily we could annihilate them—they might be brought to terms."

"As you think best—so long as my daughter is not put in any further danger."

"Well, with your permission, we will set off a blast directly over the old entrance to the cave. What say you, Roll?"

"A good idea. Send and get the dynamite at once," was the quick retort.

A couple of men were dispatched for the dangerous explosive, and our young friends sat down to wait.

It seemed to be a much longer time than it really was before the dynamite arrived, but when it did come an experienced man at once prepared to set it off.

A few minutes later a terrific explosion rang out, which must have certainly struck terror to the hearts of the outlaws.

It wrought more destruction than our friends anticipated. The part of the bluff where the tangled mass of vines were fell in with a crash, killing a number of the outlaws' horses, but blocking entrance to the main cave still more effectually than it had been.

"That was awful!" groaned Gen. Gunter. "The shrieks of those horses as the earth and rock caved in made me think of the probable fate of poor, innocent Fannie."

"Have no fear that the explosion harmed your daughter, sir," spoke up Dell. "I have been in the place, you know, and I assure you that neither she nor the men were in this part of the cave."

The general made no reply but walked off, striving to calm himself.

"Some one must carry a flag of truce around by way of the river and see if the scoundrels are ready to surrender

now," said Roll Smith. "Who will be the one to volunteer to do the job?"

"I will."

It was a feminine voice that spoke.

Turning, our two friends saw a handsome young lady standing before them.

It was Lizzie Haverhill. She had just arrived on the scene.

Attired in a neat riding suit and jaunty hat, she looked the picture of loveliness—especially to the dashing young detective.

"You go with the flag of truce, Miss Haverhill?" faltered Roll.

"Certainly. Why not? Have I not proved that I am courageous enough to undertake such a simple task as that? Besides, the outlaws would not be so apt to do harm to me as they might to a man if he was sent."

"What does this mean, Lizzie?" demanded Gen. Gunter, stepping forward. "This is not a fit place for you. You should not think of such a thing as bearing a flag of truce to such a band of villains. Give up your foolish idea at once."

"Uncle, I will not. I have never disobeyed you before, but I must now. I spent several days in the outlaws' cave, disguised as a boy, as you know. And I came out without being harmed in the least. Just because I am a female is no reason why I should not be capable of doing something toward the rescue of Fannie."

The general gave a gasp of astonishment.

His stern look turned to one of admiration, and then, in a reconciled manner, he said:

"Very well, do as you desire. If it will help bring Fannie to me, proceed in your rash undertaking."

"Mr. Smith must accompany me part of the way," went on the brave girl. "Give me a rifle, please."

A soldier handed his weapon to her, and, tying her handkerchief to the muzzle, she started off without further loss of time.

"It must be unconditional surrender!" exclaimed the general as the detective started after her.

"All right," Roll answered; "but, first of all, your daughter must be given her liberty."

"Yes, certainly."

As the couple made the descent to the river bank, Dell Watson shook his head admiringly.

"A fine girl, that," he muttered. "But I hardly think she can come up to the captive in the outlaws' cave. I guess I'll follow along behind and see what happens."

Along the bank of the river Roll and Lizzie made their way till the place where it was necessary to step into the shallow water was reached.

They were just beyond the line of the guards and the daring girl held her flag of truce high in the air.

"Fire a shot to attract the attention of those inside the cave, and then step back out of sight," she said.

Roll immediately did as he was directed.

The effect was all that could be desired, inasmuch as the figure of a man suddenly stepped from behind a rock, also carrying a flag of truce.

It was Capt. Charlie himself! A bloody bandage was about his head, and he looked as though he was really ready to surrender.

"What is it?" he asked.

The men on guard could see Lizzie plainly, but a bend in the rock hid the outlaw captain from their sight.

However, they heard his words, and they listened attentively.

"I have come to inform you that you must deliver Miss Gunter to me and give yourselves up!" exclaimed Lizzie in a clear, firm voice.

"What is that?" queried Capt. Charlie with affected deafness, at the same time wading a few steps nearer.

As he made this move two men suddenly appeared behind him, their hands being devoid of weapons.

The girl repeated what she had said in a louder tone.

"Did Gen. Gunter send you here?" asked the outlaw captain.

"Yes."

"Well, tell him I am willing to give up his daughter, providing he gives me and my men twenty-four hours to get out of the county."

"Is that your final answer?"

"It is. In case he does not agree to it we will die here, along with his daughter, if he dares to use any more dynamite."

"I will take back your answer."

As Lizzie Haverhill said this a startling thing happened.

Like tigers the two outlaws who had been standing behind their leader darted forward.

Before the brave girl scarcely knew it, she was seized and rendered helpless.

The detective, revolver in hand, sprang to her aid.

But a well-directed blow from Capt. Charlie rendered him senseless.

Then, holding their two captives in front of them, so the guards dared not shoot, the three villains backed their way to the entrance of the cave.

CHAPTER XVIII.

DELL ON DUTY.

Dell Watson was but a few yards distant from the guards on the river bank, listening to the conversation between Lizzie Haverhill and Capt. Charlie.

He could not hear all the outlaw said, but the girl's words came to his ears quite distinctly.

He could not see either of the speakers, but had his eyes on the detective, who was standing behind the corner of the rock.

When he saw Roll suddenly dart out he involuntarily sprang forward, drawing his revolver as he did so.

He saw the guards lift their rifles to their shoulders, but they did not fire.

"Treachery!" exclaimed the young engineer. "I must be there to help!"

Through the bushes that lined the river bank he hurried, and when he reached the guards they told him to stop.

"The outlaw captain has fooled us," said one of them. "Don't go beyond us, or you will be in the way in case we shoot."

Dell halted, astonished and angered at what had transpired.

"Where is the young lady?" he demanded.

"In the cave now, and so is the fellow who was close behind her," was the reply.

"How did it happen?"

"They were seized and carried there."

"And you stood here, rifles in your hands, and allowed it to be done?"

"We dared not shoot for fear of hitting the young lady and the man."

"Nice shots you must be," retorted Dell hotly. "Do you mean to say you couldn't prevent this?"

"See here," spoke up one of the soldiers, "you are nothing but a boy, and I don't mean to have you interfere with my business. Go on back, out of the way, or it will be the worse for you."

The young engineer was so angered at this remark that he lost all control of himself.

Springing forward, he dealt the guard a blow on the chin which caused him to stagger backward.

"Take that, you lunkhead!" he cried. "I want you to understand that I am more interested in this business than you are. A man who doesn't know how to fire a rifle should not wear a suit of blue."

Down went the soldier's gun, and with a hoarse cry of resentment, he sprang upon the boy to thrash him for his impudence.

None of the rest of the guards made a move to interfere, and it looked as though Dell was going to fare pretty badly, as the man was older and bigger than he, and very active.

The blow he aimed at Dell's head would certainly have ended the quarrel—had it reached.

But it did not, and the soldier received a smart rap between the eyes for his pains.

This dazed him somewhat, and before he could recover a well-directed blow sent him to the grass—knocked out, as it were.

"Now I shall go and report you to the general!" the boy exclaimed as he walked away.

This he lost no time in doing, telling everything that had happened.

"Probably you are right, and probably the guards are. I shall investigate at once," said Gen. Gunter.

While he was picking out the men to relieve the guards on the river bank, the sound of a locomotive whistle came from the track.

Dell gave a start.

He knew the whistle only too well.

It was No. 5, his locomotive.

Toot-toot! Again the whistle sounded.

"I guess that means a call for some one; quite likely it is for me," he said. "I will go and see."

The young engineer started for the track.

As the reader knows, the distance was not great.

Dell soon got there and found his engine at a standstill.

Superintendent Abbott jumped down from the cab and started to meet him.

"Dell," said he, "take your engine and get back to Canto. I ran her up myself. You have just time to get back before the regular train starts."

"But, Mr. Abbott," began the boy.

"No buts about it. Go ahead. Your services are needed to make your regular run. The extra man is sick, and you must go. Hurry now."

The young engineer said no more. Much as he would like to have stayed, he knew that his duty required him to go.

So he got aboard his locomotive and started for Canto.

It would be useless to describe the feelings of the boy as the miles were covered on the trip to Canto. His friend, the detective, and two fair young girls were in the outlaws' den and the critical moment almost at hand.

It would probably all be over, one way or the other, before he got back to Blackwater Gap, and he would not be in at the finish!

But he did not allow himself to lose sight of the responsibility that rested upon him, and in due time he pulled up at the turntable in Canto.

A dispatch from the superintendent awaited him here which read:

"Don't fail to make your regular run!"

So Dell took out the late afternoon train.

When he reached Blackwater one of the deputies was on the station, and he was informed that things were just the same as when he left.

There was nothing encouraging in this.

What had become of Roll and Lizzie Haverhill was what he wanted to know, and how the pretty Fannie Gunter was faring.

Though he was alive to his duty and made the run to

Peakville on time, it seemed to Dell that the hours passed very slowly.

He could not remain still a minute while he waited for the time to arrive when the midnight train was to leave, and he grew so uneasy that Dan Hayes, the conductor, had to take him in hand.

But at length the time came to start.

Never had the train made such a run to Blackwater before.

Unable to prevent it, Dell let No. 5 out to her fullest extent.

When the train stopped at Blackwater it was over six minutes ahead of time.

While waiting here a messenger ran up to the cab and informed Dell that Gen. Gunter had gone insane and given the order to blow up the outlaws' cave at the risk of killing all who were in it!

The young engineer gave a groan.

But still he must attend to his duty.

He started the locomotive, the same as he always did when the signal came from the conductor, but for the first time in his career he failed to look ahead.

Suddenly the open window in the front of the cab was darkened, and the next minute a man dove headlong upon him, seizing him by the throat.

Though taken unawares, Dell recognized his assailant immediately.

It was Capt. Charlie, the outlaw!

CHAPTER XIX.

THE CAVE IS DESERTED.

"I fear the general is losing his mind," said one of the soldiers to the leader of the deputies. "He has ordered the cave to be blown up, and if this happens the two girls and the detective will surely be killed along with the outlaws."

It was some time in the afternoon when this was said, and the deputy grew very uneasy when he heard it.

"I wish that young fellow Smith was here," he observed half to himself. "He is the boss of this business, anyway. He'd soon show Gen. Galveston Gunter who was in authority here."

"I suppose his arguments would have considerable weight with the general," the soldier admitted.

"Well, I guess I'll go and see what he has to say. If he is crazy he will have to be taken in hand."

The two walked over to the place where the general was walking up and down, and wildly waving his arms.

He was not exactly out of his mind, but he had been, temporarily, when he issued the order to blow up the cave and kill all within.

But in spite of his command no one made a move to place any dynamite ready to be exploded.

The deputies had been placed in charge of the dangerous explosive, and, like their leader, could not see where the commander of Fort Marco had any jurisdiction over them.

They were aware of the fact that his daughter was a prisoner in the hands of the outlaws, and also that Roll Smith, the detective, and Lizzie Haverhill had been captured by them while displaying a flag of truce.

Consequently the order to blow up the cave sounded like the ravings of a madman.

Strange to say, the general quieted down after the arrival of the leader of the deputies. He did not repeat his order, and there was no cause for trouble.

And so matters stood until darkness set in.

It would have been but the question of a short time for the soldiers and deputies to put an end forever to the outlaws of Blackwater Gap. But they dared not strike the blow.

So they waited and waited.

Until some wise head put forth some brilliant scheme, no move would be made!

The hours passed on.

Men had been dispatched to the fort after rations, and it looked as though the general meant to starve the villains out.

He had been remarkably quiet since his attack of insanity had subsided, and no order or even suggestion came from his lips.

Midnight came, and the situation remained the same.

Presently the late train went through.

The guards were getting tired of it.

Some of them sat down upon rocks, and others leaned against trees.

They took it for granted that the thing would not be settled until the outlaws were starved out.

It must have been three o'clock in the morning when the sharp command of "Halt!" came from the lips of one of the cavalymen.

Two forms were approaching from the river above the cataract.

"It is all right. We are friends!" came the quick reply in a female's voice. "I am the person who bore the flag of truce to the outlaws."

It was no other than Lizzie Haverhill.

And Roll Smith walked at her side.

In order to explain the cause of their unexpected appearance we must go back to the time the outlaws played the trick of treachery upon them.

If Roll had not been stunned at the go-off, it is more than probable that he would have made it decidedly unpleasant for Capt. Charlie and his two sneaking assistants.

But as it was, he knew nothing until he found himself in the outlaws' cave, bound hand and foot.

He looked about him in a dazed way, and it was several seconds before he realized what had happened.

The outlaws were gathered close about the entrance, prepared for an attack from those outside, it seemed, for all of them had their weapons in readiness.

The detective managed to work himself to a sitting posture, and as he did so he attracted the attention of Capt. Charlie by the slight noise he made.

The outlaw captain at once walked over to him.

"Well, you sneak of a detective, I have gained another point in the game, you see!" he exclaimed.

"So you have, but it will not count for long," was the bold retort.

"We shall see about that. Even if Fannie Gunter did go to her death over the cataract, I have you and Lizzie Haverhill to bring the fiends outside to terms."

Roll was more than surprised when he heard the villain say that the general's daughter had gone over the cataract to her death, but he did not show it by word or sign.

"I wanted the girl for my lawful wife, but she rushed to her death, and now she will never be anybody's wife in this world!"

"That being the case the best thing you can do now is to give yourself up and let the law take its course," the detective said, after a moment of thought.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Capt. Charlie, boisterously. "Not on your life, young man. When I give up it will be because I am dead! And," he added vehemently, "you will be dead, too! Do you understand me?"

"I guess I do."

"You seem to take it coolly," he said.

"I was brought up to take things coolly."

"It is a good way to be. But your coolness will avail you nothing this trip. If they want to blow up the cave with dynamite, they are welcome to do it as soon as they like. I will never be taken alive—that is certain."

The consummate scoundrel walked away as he said this, leaving the detective in anything but a happy frame of mind.

A short time after this Capt. Charlie ordered all the liquor that was in the cave to be brought out, and he then proceeded to fill up the men to their heart's content.

Roll was powerless to do a thing, and he was getting more and more uneasy.

He did not know where Lizzie was, but was sure she was in the cave somewhere.

He hardly knew whether to believe or not the story of Fannie Gunter's fate.

But the outlaw captain had told it as though he meant it, and Roll was gradually forced to believe that the girl had really perished.

Shortly after midnight the outlaw captain again approached his prisoner.

"Well," said he, "we are going to leave the cave. The guards are not watching very well outside, and we are going out through the hole your friend, the boy engineer, made for my intended bride to escape through. I am glad he took the trouble to make that opening, for it gives us our opportunity to get out. I am sorry we cannot take you with us. But you and the brave and daring Lizzie Haverhill will get out in a hurry when your friends blow the cave up. So long, Mr. Detective! I wish you a pleasant journey to the other world!"

Astonished at these words, Roll lay and watched the villains of the desperate band as they made their way into the apartment that had been for so many days the prison of Fannie Gunter.

Two minutes after the last man had disappeared a deadly silence reigned in the cave.

The detective now grew desperate.

"I must get loose!" he muttered between his clinched teeth. "It is now life or death with me!"

He began struggling wildly, and with a superhuman effort wrenched his hands free.

A thrill of joy shot through Roll.

"I thought I could do it!" he exclaimed. "My wrists are large, as the outlaw captain ought to have known, as he had experience in tying me up before. But he overlooked it, and tied me the same as he would any ordinary person. Now for Lizzie and liberty!"

Half a minute later he was upon his feet a free man!

It did not take him long to find the girl. She was in the prison last occupied by Fannie and the Indian maiden.

In order that she could not possibly get out of her own accord, the outlaws had bound her securely.

Roll freed her in short order, and then the couple made a thorough search of the underground place for Fannie.

But she was not there, and Roll now fully believed that she was really dead.

He allowed Lizzie to think, however, that the villains had taken her away with them.

After passing the guards, Roll and Lizzie soon reached the presence of Gen. Gunter.

CHAPTER XX.

DELL'S LAST ENCOUNTER WITH CAPT. CHARLIE.

Though Dell Watson was taken completely by surprise when Capt. Charlie seized him by the throat, he did not lose his presence of mind. He realized that the outlaw meant to kill him, so whatever he did to prevent this must be done quickly.

Instead of struggling with his assailant, the young engineer allowed himself to drop to the floor of the cab.

As he did this the fireman grasped the situation and flung himself upon the would-be murderer.

Capt. Charlie's revolver slipped from his hand when Dell dropped beneath him in such an unexpected manner, but the villain drew a murderous-looking knife and prepared to plunge it in the boy's heart.

But the fireman caught him just in time.

He was a powerful fellow, was the fireman, and with one mighty effort he seized the outlaw captain and flung him completely off the locomotive.

"Thank you!" exclaimed Dell, as he arose to his feet and seized his mate by the hand. "You saved my life!"

"That's nothin'," retorted the fireman. "I'm awful glad I was quick enough to do it. My! I didn't know I was going to throw the man clean off the engine, though. I ought to have thumped him on the head and then made him a prisoner."

"It is too bad you didn't. He was Capt. Charlie, the leader of the outlaws of Blackwater Gap."

"He was?"

"Yes."

"Well, it is likely he broke his neck, anyhow."

"I hope so, for the benefit of the community. As soon as we get into Canto I am going to get permission to come back and see. I also want to find out how they are making out up at the outlaws' cave."

"I'll only be too glad to come with you," said the fireman.

Without informing the conductor or any one on the train of what had taken place, Dell finished the run to Canto.

As soon as he got off his engine he made his way to the residence of the superintendent, around him, and told him of his adventure with the outlaw captain.

"I want to go right back, Mr. Abbott," he said in conclusion. "Have I permission?"

"Certainly, Dell, go ahead. Wait! I guess I'll go with you. I am very anxious to see the end of this outlaw business. Something tells me that the last of it is about here. I'll be ready in five minutes. Go on down to your engine."

Less than ten minutes later No. 5 was speeding along the track in the direction of Blackwater Gap.

There were only three in the cab—Dell, the fireman and the superintendent.

The young engineer kept up a high rate of speed until they neared the place where Capt. Charlie had been thrown off.

The locomotive came to a stop at the point where the fireman said was the exact place.

Then Dell and Mr. Abbott got off, lanterns in hand.

A thorough search up and down that side of the track was made, but the body of the outlaw could not be found.

As the ground was rather soft here, they had no difficulty in locating the spot where he struck when he was hurled from the locomotive.

But he had escaped death, or even serious injury, in all probability.

Dell's perilous experience reminded him that he should be on the lookout, for the villain was liable to appear when the least expected.

The outlaws' headquarters was but a short distance away, so after a short consultation with the superintendent Dell set out for the temporary camp of the soldiers and the deputies.

He carried his revolver ready for instant use, and proceeded very cautiously.

He chose the river bank for his course, and he soon neared the cataract.

Just as he was about to hail one of the guards a man sprang from behind a bush and darted toward him.

He was hatless and wild-eyed, and in the straggling rays of moonlight that came through the foliage overheard the young engineer recognized him as Capt. Charlie.

Once more the two had met! But it was on more equal footing this time.

The outlaw had a gleaming knife in his hand, and Dell had his revolver.

"Stop!" cried the boy. "Another step and you die!"

But the villain did not heed him. Instead, he made a vicious lunge at Dell.

There being no other course to pursue, the young engineer dodged the blow aimed at his heart, and then pressed the trigger of his revolver.

Snap! The cartridge failed to explode!

With the scream of a veritable demon Capt. Charlie sprang upon the boy, and succeeded for the second time that night in grasping him by the throat.

Up flew his keen-edged weapon, and then—

A lithe form bounded upon him from behind, there was a dull thud, and releasing his grip upon the knife, the outlaw gave a convulsive shudder and dropped to the ground dead!

A dark-skinned girl with blazing eyes, and dripping with water, had saved Dell.

It was Red Rose!

The boy recognized her immediately, but before he had time to say a word the guards, who had been attracted by the noise, seized both boy and Indian maiden.

As quickly as possible they were dragged into camp.

CHAPTER XXI.

FINAL SCENES.

When Dell Watson was brought into the light of the blazing camp fire on the top of the bluff, almost the first person his eyes rested upon was Roll Smith.

He gave a cry of joy, which was echoed by his friend, as he sprang forward to grasp the boy's hand.

"So you have got here at last?" exclaimed the detective. "Well, you are needed very much just now. All the outlaws have been captured except their leader, Capt. Charlie. He is missing, and so is Fannie Gunter and the Indian girl."

"I am here!" exclaimed Red Rose, twisting herself free from the soldier who held her by the arm. "I will tell you that the White Rose is—is alive!"

"And Capt. Charlie is dead!" added the young engineer. And then for the first time he noticed that the Indian girl was bleeding from a wound in the back of the head.

"The White Rose is under the waterfall," went on the Indian girl. "She is——"

But that was all that came from her lips. She sank down as limp as a rag.

Red Rose would never speak again!

The bullet Capt. Charlie had fired at her just the instant before she went over the cataract with her fair young mistress had done its work at last.

But the faithful creature's death had been avenged! With her own hand she had stabbed the outlaw captain to the heart, thus keeping her promise "that she would kill him some time."

Tenderly the body was carried to a tent, and the little brown hands folded across her breast.

And when the story of her devotion had been told there was not a dry eye in camp.

The tragedy had the effect of rousing Gen. Gunter to his normal state.

He at once sought Dell Watson.

"You are the young man who has been under the cataract. Go and rescue my daughter," he said.

The young engineer gave a start.

He had been like one in a dream since the sudden death of Red Rose, and the words of the old soldier brought him to his senses once more.

"Certainly I will!" he answered quickly, and away he darted for the river.

Nearly the entire party followed, Lizzie Haverhill and the general included.

The deputies carried blazing torches, and they held them over the river bank as the brave boy removed his coat, hat and shoes.

It seemed that the cataract had never roared so loudly before to those who were anxiously waiting to see what the boy would do.

But they were not long in suspense.

A sharp, quick run along the bank, and Dell sprang into the falling sheet of water.

Five minutes elapsed, and then he appeared several

yards below the falls, supporting a human form and swimming for the bank.

A hoarse shout of approval went up from the soldiers and deputies, and a dozen hands helped drag the half-drowned Fannie Gunter out of the river.

Dell followed, gasping and sputtering from his fight with the turbulent water.

While the rescued girl, who had been so long a prisoner in the outlaws' cave, was being carried to the camp, Roll gave a signal, and the brave young engineer of No. 5 was lifted bodily and hurried along after her.

It was quite a demonstration, and at the order of Gen. Gunter the cavalrymen fired a salute.

The outlaws, who had been neatly caught by a scouting band of soldiers, were securely bound and ready to be landed in jail.

By the time daylight arrived Fannie Gunter had fully recovered, and was ready to ride to her home.

When Dell parted with her he gave her the promise that he would call upon her at no distant day.

One hour later, the vicinity of the haunt of Capt. Charlie Williams and his band of outlaws was deserted, even the body of the captain having been taken away.

Roll and the superintendent rode to Canto on Dell Watson's engine, everybody being in a happy frame of mind.

There is but little more to be told.

The outlaws were tried and duly hanged for their crimes.

Roll Smith received his reward from the railroad company, but he was not satisfied with that, and at length succeeded in getting another reward.

This came from Lizzie Haverhill in the shape of her hand and heart, and was prized higher than all the riches of the earth by the recipient.

Dell Watson is still running an engine on the C., B. & P. Railroad, which runs over a double track, and the last we heard of him he was engaged to be married to Fannie Gunter.

Everything has run along smoothly since the breaking up of the Outlaws of Blackwater Gap, and the credit is given to Dell and Roll, the two brave chums.

THE END.

The next issue, No. 53, will contain "The Crimson Cross; or, The Mystery of His Birth," by Bernard Maxwell. This is a capital story in every way. The hero is a splendid young fellow who does not know who his parents are, and he sets out to discover them, meeting with all sorts of extraordinary adventures. You will read "The Crimson Cross" with bated breath, eager to know the solution of the mystery.